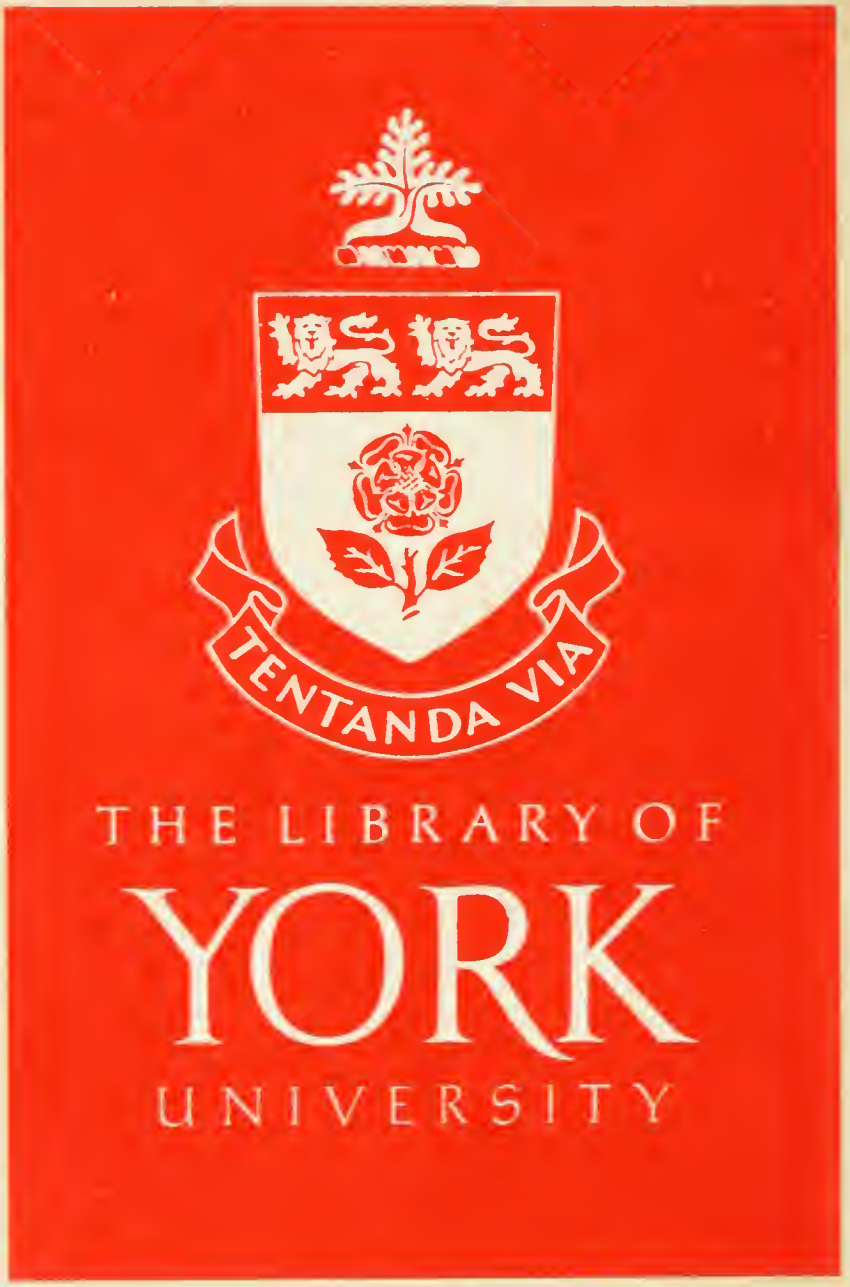
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NATURAL HISTORY OF INTELLECT

AND OTHER PAPERS

BY

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

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PREFATORY NOTE.

THE first two pieces in this volume are lectures from the "University Courses" on philosophy, given at Harvard College in 1870 and 1871, by persons not members of the Faculty. "The Natural History of the Intellect" was the subject which Emerson chose. He had from his early youth cherished the project of a new method in metaphysics, proceeding by observation of the mental facts, without attempting an analysis and coördination of them, which must, from the nature of the case, be premature. With this view, he had, at intervals from 1848 to 1866, announced courses on the "Natural History of Intellect," "The Natural Method of Mental Philosophy," and "Philosophy for the People." He would, he said, give anecdotes of the spirit, a calendar of mental moods, without any pretense of system.

None of these attempts, however, disclosed any novelty of method, or, indeed, after the opening statement of his intention, any marked difference from his ordinary lectures. He had always been writing anecdotes

of the spirit, and those which he wrote under this heading were used by him in subsequently published essays so largely that I find very little left for present publication. The lecture which gives its name to the volume was the first of the earliest course, and it seems to me to include all that distinctly belongs to the particular subject.

The lecture on "Memory" is from the same course; that on "Boston" from the course on "Life and Literature," in 1861. The other pieces are reprints from the "North American Review" and the "Dial."

J. E. Cabot.

September 9, 1893.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
Natural History of Intellect	7
Memory	55
Boston	73
Michael Angelo	97
Milton	121
Papers from The Dial	147
I. Thoughts on Modern Literature	149
II. Walter Savage Landor	168
III. Prayers	177
IV. Agriculture of Massachusetts	183
V. Europe and European Books	187
VI. Past and Present	197
VII. A Letter	206
VIII. The Tragic	216

NATURAL HISTORY OF INTELLECT.

NATURAL HISTORY OF INTELLECT.

I HAVE used such opportunity as I have had, and lately[1] in London and Paris, to attend scientific lectures ; and in listening to Richard Owen's masterly enumeration of the parts and laws of the human body, or Michael Faraday's explanation of magnetic powers, or the botanist's descriptions, one could not help admiring the irresponsible security and happiness of the attitude of the naturalist ; sure of admiration for his facts, sure of their sufficiency. They ought to interest you ; if they do not, the fault lies with you.

Then I thought — could not a similar enumeration be made of the laws and powers of the Intellect, and possess the same claims on the student ? Could we have, that is, the exhaustive accuracy of distribution which chemists use in their nomenclature and anatomists in their descriptions, applied to a higher class of facts ; to those laws, namely, which are common to chemistry, anatomy, astronomy, geometry, intellect, morals, and social life ; — laws of the world ?

Why not ? These powers and laws are also facts in a Natural History. They also are objects of science, and may be numbered and recorded, like stamens and vertebræ. At the same time they have a deeper inter-

[1] 1850.

est, as in the order of nature they lie higher and are nearer to the mysterious seat of power and creation.

For at last, it is only that exceeding and universal part which interests us, when we shall read in a true history what befalls in that kingdom where a thousand years is as one day, and see that what is set down is true through all the sciences ; in the laws of thought as well as of chemistry.

In all sciences the student is discovering that nature, as he calls it, is always working, in wholes and in every detail, after the laws of the human mind. Every creation, in parts or in particles, is on the method and by the means which our mind approves as soon as it is thoroughly acquainted with the facts ; hence the delight. No matter how far or how high science explores, it adopts the method of the universe as fast as it appears ; and this discloses that the mind as it opens, the mind as it shall be, comprehends and works thus ; that is to say, the Intellect builds the universe and is the key to all it contains. It is not then cities or mountains, or animals, or globes that any longer command us, but only man ; not the fact, but so much of man as is in the fact.

In astronomy, vast distance, but we never go into a foreign system. In geology, vast duration, but we are never strangers. Our metaphysic should be able to follow the flying force through all transformations, and name the pair identical through all variety.

I believe in the existence of the material world as the expression of the spiritual or the real, and in the impenetrable mystery which hides (and hides through absolute transparency) the mental nature, I await the insight which our advancing knowledge of material laws shall furnish.

Every object in nature is a word to signify some fact in the mind. But when that fact is not yet put into English words, when I look at the tree or the river and have not yet definitely made out what they would say to me, they are by no means unimpressive. I wait for them, I enjoy them before they yet speak. I feel as if I stood by an ambassador charged with the message of his king, which he does not deliver because the hour when he should say it is not yet arrived.

Whilst we converse with truths as thoughts, they exist also as plastic forces ; as the soul of a man, the soul of a plant, the genius or constitution of any part of nature, which makes it what it is. The thought which was in the world, part and parcel of the world, has disengaged itself and taken an independent existence.

My belief in the use of a course on philosophy is that the student shall learn to appreciate the miracle of the mind ; shall learn its subtle but immense power, or shall begin to learn it ; shall come to know that in seeing and in no tradition he must find what truth is ; that he shall see in it the source of all traditions, and shall see each one of them as better or worse statement of its revelations ; shall come to trust it entirely, as the only true ; to cleave to God against the name of God. When he has once known the oracle he will need no priest. And if he finds at first with some alarm how impossible it is to accept many things which the hot or the mild sectarian may insist on his believing, he will be armed by his insight and brave to meet all inconvenience and all resistance it may cost him. He from whose hand it came will guide and direct it.

Yet these questions which really interest men, how

few can answer. Here are learned faculties of law and divinity, but would questions like these come into mind when I see them? Here are learned academies and universities, yet they have not propounded these for any prize.

Seek the literary circles, the stars of fame, the men of splendor, of bon-mots, will they afford me satisfaction? I think you could not find a club of men acute and liberal enough in the world. Bring the best wits together, and they are so impatient of each other, so vulgar, there is so much more than their wit, — such follies, gluttonies, partialities, age, care, and sleep, that you shall have no academy.

There is really a grievous amount of unavailableness about men of wit. A plain man finds them so heavy, dull and oppressive, with bad jokes and conceit and stupefying individualism, that he comes to write in his tablets, Avoid the great man as one who is privileged to be an unprofitable companion. For the course of things makes the scholars either egotists or worldly and jocose. In so many hundreds of superior men hardly ten or five or two from whom one can hope for a reasonable word.

Go into the scientific club and hearken. Each savant proves in his admirable discourse that he and he only knows now or ever did know anything on the subject: "Does the gentleman speak of anatomy? Who peeped into a box at the Custom House and then published a drawing of my rat?" Or is it pretended discoveries of new strata that are before the meeting? This professor hastens to inform us that he knew it all twenty years ago, and is ready to prove that he knew so much then that all further investigation was quite

superfluous ; — and poor nature and the sublime law, which is all that our student cares to hear of, are quite omitted in this triumphant vindication.

Was it better when we came to the philosophers, who found everybody wrong ; acute and ingenious to lampoon and degrade mankind ? And then was there ever prophet burdened with a message to his people who did not cloud our gratitude by a strange confounding in his own mind of private folly with his public wisdom ?

But if you like to run away from this besetting sin of sedentary men, you can escape all this insane egotism by running into society, where the manners and estimate of the world have corrected this folly, and effectually suppressed this overweening self-conceit. Here each is to make room for others, and the solidest merits must exist only for the entertainment of all. We are not in the smallest degree helped. Great is the dazzle, but the gain is small. Here they play the game of conversation, as they play billiards, for pastime and credit.

Yes, 't is a great vice in all countries, the sacrifice of scholars to be courtiers and diners-out, to talk for the amusement of those who wish to be amused, though the stars of heaven must be plucked down and packed into rockets to this end. What with egotism on one side and levity on the other we shall have no Olympus.

But there is still another hindrance, namely, practicality. We must have a special talent, and bring something to pass. Ever since the Norse heaven made the stern terms of admission that a man must do something excellent with his hands or feet, or with his voice, eyes, ears, or with his whole body, the same demand has been made in Norse earth.

Yet what we really want is not a haste to act, but a certain piety toward the source of action and knowledge. In fact we have to say that there is a certain beatitude — I can call it nothing less — to which all men are entitled, tasted by them in different degrees, which is a perfection of their nature, and to which their entrance must be in every way forwarded. Practical men, though they could lift the globe, cannot arrive at this. Something very different has to be done, — the availing ourselves of every impulse of genius, an emanation of the heaven it tells of, and the resisting this conspiracy of men and material things against the sanitary and legitimate inspirations of the intellectual nature.

What is life but the angle of vision ? A man is measured by the angle at which he looks at objects. What is life but what a man is thinking of all day ? This is his fate and his employer. Knowing is the measure of the man. By how much we know, so much we are.

The laws and powers of the Intellect have, however, a stupendous peculiarity, of being at once observers and observed. So that it is difficult to hold them fast, as objects of examination, or hinder them from turning the professor out of his chair. The wonder of the science of Intellect is that the substance with which we deal is of that subtle and active quality that it intoxicates all who approach it. Gloves on the hands, glass guards over the eyes, wire-gauze masks over the face, volatile salts in the nostrils, are no defence against this virus, which comes in as secretly as gravitation into and through all barriers.

Let me have your attention to this dangerous subject, which we will cautiously approach on different sides of this dim and perilous lake, so attractive, so delusive. We have had so many guides and so many failures. And now the world is still uncertain whether the pool has been sounded or not.

My contribution will be simply historical. I write anecdotes of the intellect ; a sort of Farmer's Almanac of mental moods. I confine my ambition to true reporting of its play in natural action, though I should get only one new fact in a year.

I cannot myself use that systematic form which is reckoned essential in treating the science of the mind. But if one can say so without arrogance, I might suggest that he who contents himself with dotting a fragmentary curve, recording only what facts he has observed, without attempting to arrange them within one outline, follows a system also, — a system as grand as any other, though he does not interfere with its vast curves by prematurely forcing them into a circle or ellipse, but only draws that arc which he clearly sees, or perhaps at a later observation a remote curve of the same orbit, and waits for a new opportunity, well-assured that these observed arcs will consist with each other.

I confess to a little distrust of that completeness of system which metaphysicians are apt to affect. 'T is the gnat grasping the world. All these exhaustive theories appear indeed a false and vain attempt to introvert and analyze the Primal Thought. That is upstream, and what a stream ! Can you swim up Niagara Falls ?.

We have invincible repugnance to introversion, to

study of the eyes instead of that which the eyes see ; and the belief of men is that the attempt is unnatural and is punished by loss of faculty. I share the belief that the natural direction of the intellectual powers is from within outward, and that just in proportion to the activity of thoughts on the study of outward objects, as architecture, or farming, or natural history, ships, animals, chemistry, — in that proportion the faculties of the mind had a healthy growth ; but a study in the opposite direction had a damaging effect on the mind.

Metaphysic is dangerous as a single pursuit. We should feel more confidence in the same results from the mouth of a man of the world. The inward analysis must be corrected by rough experience. Metaphysics must be perpetually reinforced by life ; must be the observations of a working-man on working-men ; must be biography, — the record of some law whose working was surprised by the observer in natural action.

I think metaphysics a grammar to which, once read, we seldom return. 'T is a Manila full of pepper, and I want only a teaspoonful in a year. I admire the Dutch, who burned half the harvest to enhance the price of the remainder.

I want not the logic but the power, if any, which it brings into science and literature ; the man who can humanize this logic, these syllogisms, and give me the results. The adepts value only the pure geometry, the aerial bridge ascending from earth to heaven with arches and abutments of pure reason. I am fully contented if you tell me where are the two termini.

My metaphysics are to the end of use. I wish to know the laws of this wonderful power, that I may domesticate it. I observe with curiosity its risings and

settings, illumination and eclipse ; its obstructions and its provocations, that I may learn to live with it wisely, court its aid, catch sight of its splendor, feel its approach, hear and save its oracles and obey them. But this watching of the mind, in season and out of season, to see the mechanics of the thing, is a little of the detective. The analytic process is cold and bereaving and, shall I say it ? somewhat mean, as spying. There is something surgical in metaphysics as we treat it. Were not an ode a better form ? The poet sees wholes and avoids analysis ; the metaphysician, dealing as it were with the mathematics of the mind, puts himself out of the way of the inspiration ; loses that which is the miracle and creates the worship.

I think that philosophy is still rude and elementary. It will one day be taught by poets. The poet is in the natural attitude ; he is believing ; the philosopher, after some struggle, having only reasons for believing.

What I am now to attempt is simply some sketches or studies for such a picture ; *Mémoires pour servir* toward a Natural History of Intellect.

First I wish to speak of the excellence of that element, and the great auguries that come from it, notwithstanding the impediments which our sensual civilization puts in the way.

Next I treat of the identity of the thought with Nature ; and I add a rude list of some by-laws of the mind.

Thirdly I proceed to the fountains of thought in Instinct and Inspiration, and I also attempt to show the relation of men of thought to the existing religion and civility of the present time.

I. We figure to ourselves Intellect as an ethereal sea, which ebbs and flows, which surges and washes hither and thither, carrying its whole virtue into every creek and inlet which it bathes. To this sea every human house has a water front. But this force, creating nature, visiting whom it will and withdrawing from whom it will, making day where it comes and leaving night when it departs, is no fee or property of man or angel. It is as the light, public and entire to each, and on the same terms.

What but thought deepens life, and makes us better than cow or cat? The grandeur of the impression the stars and heavenly bodies make on us is surely more valuable than our exact perception of a tub or a table on the ground.

To Be is the unsolved, unsolvable wonder. To Be, in its two connections of inward and outward, the mind and nature. The wonder subsists, and age, though of eternity, could not approach a solution. But the suggestion is always returning, that hidden source publishing at once our being and that it is the source of outward nature. Who are we and what is Nature have one answer in the life that rushes into us.

In my thought I seem to stand on the bank of a river and watch the endless flow of the stream, floating objects of all shapes, colors and natures; nor can I much detain them as they pass, except by running beside them a little way along the bank. But whence they come or whither they go is not told me. Only I have a suspicion that, as geologists say every river makes its own valley, so does this mystic stream. It makes its valley, makes its banks and makes perhaps the observer too. Who has found the boundaries of

human intelligence? Who has made a chart of its channel or approached the fountain of this wonderful Nile?

I am of the oldest religion. Leaving aside the question which was prior, egg or bird, I believe the mind is the creator of the world, and is ever creating; — that at last Matter is dead Mind; that mind makes the senses it sees with; that the genius of man is a continuation of the power that made him and that has not done making him.

I dare not deal with this element in its pure essence. It is too rare for the wings of words. Yet I see that Intellect is a science of degrees, and that as man is conscious of the law of vegetable and animal nature, so he is aware of an Intellect which overhangs his consciousness like a sky, of degree above degree, of heaven within heaven.

Every just thinker has attempted to indicate these degrees, these steps on the heavenly stair, until he comes to light where language fails him. Above the thought is the higher truth, — truth as yet undomesticated and therefore unformulated.

It is a steep stair down from the essence of Intellect pure to thoughts and intellections. As the sun is conceived to have made our system by hurling out from itself the outer rings of diffuse ether which slowly condensed into earths and moons, by a higher force of the same law the mind detaches minds, and a mind detaches thoughts or intellections. These again all mimic in their sphericity the first mind, and share its power.

Life is incessant parturition. There are viviparous

and oviparous minds ; minds that produce their thoughts complete men, like armed soldiers, ready and swift to go out to resist and conquer all the armies of error, and others that deposit their dangerous unripe thoughts here and there to lie still for a time and be brooded in other minds, and the shell not be broken until the next age, for them to begin, as new individuals, their career.

The perceptions of a soul, its wondrous progeny, are born by the conversation, the marriage of souls ; so nourished, so enlarged. They are detached from their parent, they pass into other minds ; ripened and unfolded by many they hasten to incarnate themselves in action, to take body, only to carry forward the will which sent them out. They take to themselves wood and stone and iron ; ships and cities and nations and armies of men and ages of duration ; the pomps of religion, the armaments of war, the codes and heraldry of states ; agriculture, trade, commerce ; — these are the ponderous instrumentalities into which the nimble thoughts pass, and which they animate and alter, and presently, antagonized by other thoughts which they first aroused, or by thoughts which are sons and daughters of these, the thought buries itself in the new thought of larger scope, whilst the old instrumentalities and incarnations are decomposed and recomposed into new.

Our eating, trading, marrying, and learning are mistaken by us for ends and realities, whilst they are properly symbols only ; when we have come, by a divine leading, into the inner firmament, we are apprised of the unreality or representative character of what we esteemed final.

So works the poor little blockhead manikin. He must arrange and dignify his shop or farm the best he can. At last he must be able to tell you it, or write it, translate it all clumsily enough into the new sky-language he calls thought. He cannot help it, the irresistible meliorations bear him forward.

II. Whilst we consider this appetite of the mind to arrange its phenomena, there is another fact which makes this useful. There is in nature a parallel unity which corresponds to the unity in the mind and makes it available. This methodizing mind meets no resistance in its attempts. The scattered blocks, with which it strives to form a symmetrical structure, fit. This design following after finds with joy that like design went before. Not only man puts things in a row, but things belong in a row.

It is certain that however we may conceive of the wonderful little bricks of which the world is builded, we must suppose a similarity and fitting and identity in their frame. It is necessary to suppose that every hose in nature fits every hydrant ; so only is combination, chemistry, vegetation, animation, intellection possible. Without identity at base, chaos must be forever.

And as mind, our mind or mind like ours reappears to us in our study of nature, nature being everywhere formed after a method which we can well understand, and all the parts, to the most remote, allied or explicable, — therefore our own organization is a perpetual key, and a well-ordered mind brings to the study of every new fact or class of facts a certain divination of that which it shall find.

This reduction to a few laws, to one law, is not a choice of the individual, it is the tyrannical instinct of the mind. There is no solitary flower and no solitary thought. It comes single like a foreign traveller, — but find out its name and it is related to a powerful and numerous family. Wonderful is their working and relation each to each. We hold them as lanterns to light each other and our present design. Every new thought modifies, interprets old problems. The retrospective value of each new thought is immense, like a torch applied to a long train of gunpowder. To be isolated is to be sick, and in so far, dead. The life of the All must stream through us to make the man and the moment great.

Well, having accepted this law of identity pervading the universe, we next perceive that whilst every creature represents and obeys it, there is diversity, there is more or less of power ; that the lowest only means incipient form, and over it is a higher class in which its rudiments are opened, raised to higher powers ; that there is development from less to more, from lower to superior function, steadily ascending to man.

If man has organs for breathing, for sight, for locomotion, for taking food, for digesting, for protection by house-building, by attack and defence, for reproduction and love and care of his young, you shall find all the same in the muskrat. There is a perfect correspondence ; or 't is only man modified to live in a mud-bank. A fish in like manner is man furnished to live in the sea ; a thrush, to fly in the air ; and a mollusk is a cheap edition with a suppression of the costlier illustrations, designed for dingy circulation, for shelving in an oyster-bank or among the sea-weed.

If we go through the British Museum or the Jardin des Plantes in Paris, or any cabinet where is some representation of all the kingdoms of nature, we are surprised with occult sympathies ; we feel as if looking at our own bone and flesh through coloring and distorting glasses. Is it not a little startling to see with what genius some people take to hunting, with what genius some people fish, — what knowledge they still have of the creature they hunt ? The robber, as the police-reports say, must have been intimately acquainted with the premises. How lately the hunter was the poor creature's organic enemy ; a presumption *inflamed*, as the lawyers say, by observing how many faces in the street still remind us of visages in the forest, — the escape from the quadruped type not yet perfectly accomplished.

From whatever side we look at Nature we seem to be exploring the figure of a disguised man. How obvious is the momentum in our mental history ! The momentum, which increases by exact laws in falling bodies, increases by the same rate in the intellectual action. Every scholar knows that he applies himself coldly and slowly at first to his task, but, with the progress of the work, the mind itself becomes heated, and sees far and wide as it approaches the end, so that it is the common remark of the student, Could I only have begun with the same fire which I had on the last day, I should have done something.

The affinity of particles accurately translates the affinity of thoughts, and what a modern experimenter calls " the contagious influence of chemical action " is so true of mind that I have only to read the law that

its application may be evident: "A body in the act of combination or decomposition enables another body, with which it may be in contact, to enter into the same state." And if one remembers how contagious are the moral states of men, how much we are braced by the presence and actions of any Spartan soul; it does not need vigor of our own kind, but the spectacle of vigor of any kind, any prodigious power of performance wonderfully arms and recruits us. There are those who disputing will make you dispute, and the nervous and hysterical and animalized will produce a like series of symptoms in you, though no other persons ever evoke the like phenomena, and though you are conscious that they do not properly belong to you, but are a sort of extension of the diseases of this particular person into you.

The idea of vegetation is irresistible in considering mental activity. Man seems a higher plant. What happens here in mankind is matched by what happens out there in the history of grass and wheat. This curious resemblance repeats, in the mental function, the germination, growth, state of melioration, crossings, blight, parasites, and in short all the accidents of the plant. Under every leaf is the bud of a new leaf, and not less under every thought is a newer thought. The plant absorbs much nourishment from the ground in order to repair its own waste by exhalation, and keep itself good. Increase its food and it becomes fertile. The mind is first only receptive. Surcharge it with thoughts in which it delights and it becomes active. The moment a man begins not to be convinced, that moment he begins to convince.

In the orchard many trees send out a moderate shoot

in the first summer heat, and stop. They look all summer as if they would presently burst into bud again, but they do not. The fine tree continues to grow. The same thing happens in the man. Every man has material enough in his experience to exhaust the sagacity of Newton in working it out. We have more than we use. I never hear a good speech at caucus or at cattle-show but it helps me, not so much by adding to my knowledge as by apprising me of admirable uses to which what I know can be turned. The commonest remark, if the man could only extend it a little, would make him a genius ; but the thought is prematurely checked, and grows no more. All great masters are chiefly distinguished by the power of adding a second, a third, and perhaps a fourth step in a continuous line. Many a man had taken their first step. With every additional step you enhance immensely the value of your first.

The botanist discovered long ago that Nature loves mixtures, and that nothing grows well on the crab-stock, but the blood of two trees being mixed a new and excellent fruit is produced. And not less in human history aboriginal races are incapable of improvement ; the dull, melancholy Pelasgi arrive at no civility until the Phœnicians and Ionians come in. The Briton, the Pict, is nothing until the Roman, the Saxon, the Norman, arrives.

It is observed that our mental processes go forward even when they seem suspended. Scholars say that if they return to the study of a new language after some intermission, the intelligence of it is more and not less. A subject of thought to which we return from month to month, from year to year, has always some ripeness

of which we can give no account. We say the book grew in the author's mind.

In unfit company the finest powers are paralyzed. No ambition, no opposition, no friendly attention and fostering kindness, no wine, music or exhilarating aids, neither warm fireside nor fresh air, walking or riding, avail at all to resist the palsy of mis-association. Genius is mute, is dull ; there is no genius. Ask of your flowers to open when you have let in on them a freezing wind.

The mechanical laws might as easily be shown pervading the kingdom of mind as the vegetative. A man has been in Spain. The facts and thoughts which the traveller has found in that country gradually settle themselves into a determinate heap of one size and form and not another. That is what he knows and has to say of Spain ; he cannot say it truly until a sufficient time for the arrangement of the particles has elapsed.

These views of the source of thought and the mode of its communication lead us to a whole system of ethics, strict as any department of human duty, and open to us the tendencies and duties of men of thought in the present time.

Wisdom is like electricity. There is no permanent wise man, but men capable of wisdom, who being put into certain company or other favorable conditions become wise, as glasses rubbed acquire power for a time.

An individual body is the momentary arrest or fixation of certain atoms, which, after performing compulsory duty to this enchanted statue, are released again to flow in the currents of the world. An individ-

ual mind in like manner is a fixation or momentary eddy in which certain services and powers are taken up and minister in petty niches and localities, and then, being released, return to the unbounded soul of the world.

In this eternal resurrection and rehabilitation of transitory persons, who and what are they? 'T is only the source that we can see; — the eternal mind, careless of its channels, omnipotent in itself, and continually ejaculating its torrent into every artery and vein and veinlet of humanity. Wherever there is health, that is, consent to the cause and constitution of the universe, there is perception and power.

Each man is a new power in Nature. He holds the keys of the world in his hands. No quality in Nature's vast magazines he cannot touch, no truth he cannot see. Silent, passive, even sulkily Nature offers every morning her wealth to man. She is immensely rich; he is welcome to her entire goods, but she speaks no word, will not so much as beckon or cough; only this, she is careful to leave all her doors ajar, — towers, hall, storeroom and cellar. If he takes her hint and uses her goods she speaks no word; if he blunders and starves she says nothing. To the idle blockhead Nature is poor, sterile, inhospitable. To the gardener her loam is all strawberries, pears, pineapples. To the miller her rivers whirl the wheel and weave carpets and broadcloth. To the sculptor her stone is soft; to the painter her plumbago and marl are pencils and chromes. To the poet all sounds and words are melodies and rhythms. In her hundred-gated Thebes every chamber is a new door.

But he enters the world by one key. Herein is the

wealth of each. His equipment, though new, is complete ; his prudence is his own ; his courage, his charity, are his own. He has his own defences and his own fangs ; his perception and his own mode of reply to sophistries. Whilst he draws on his own he cannot be overshadowed or supplanted.

There are two mischievous superstitions, I know not which does the most harm, one, that " I am wiser than you," and the other that " You are wiser than I." The truth is that every man is furnished, if he will heed it, with wisdom necessary to steer his own boat, — if he will not look away from his own to see how his neighbor steers his.

Every man is a new method and distributes things anew. If he could attain full size he would take up, first or last, atom by atom, all the world into a new form. And our deep conviction of the riches proper to every mind does not allow us to admit of much looking over into one another's virtues. Let me whisper a secret ; nobody ever forgives any admiration in you of them, any overestimate of what they do or have. I acquiesce to be that I am, but I wish no one to be civil to me.

Strong men understand this very well. Power fraternizes with power, and wishes you not to be like him but like yourself. Echo the leaders and they will fast enough see that you have nothing for them. They came to you for something they had not.

There is always a loss of truth and power when a man leaves working for himself to work for another. Absolutely speaking I can only work for myself. All my good is magnetic, and I educate not by lessons but by going about my business. When, moved by love, a

man teaches his child or joins with his neighbor in any act of common benefit, or spends himself for his friend, or rushes at immense personal sacrifice on some public, self-immolating act, it is not done for others, but to fulfil a high necessity of his proper character. The benefit to others is contingent and not contemplated by the doer.

The one thing not to be forgiven to intellectual persons is that they believe in the ideas of others. From this deference comes the imbecility and fatigue of their society, for of course they cannot affirm these from the deep life ; they say what they would have you believe, but what they do not quite know. Profound sincerity is the only basis of talent as of character. The temptation is to patronize Providence, to fall into the accepted ways of talking and acting of the good sort of people.

Each has a certain aptitude for knowing or doing somewhat which, when it appears, is so adapted and aimed on that, that it seems a sort of obtuseness to everything else. Well, this aptitude, if he would obey it, would prove a telescope to bring under his clear vision what was blur to everybody else. 'T is a wonderful instrument, an organic sympathy with the whole frame of things. There is no property or relation in that immense arsenal of forces which the earth is, but some man is at last found who affects this, delights to unfold and work it, as if he were the born publisher and demonstrator of it.

As a dog has a sense that you have not, to find the track of his master or of a fox, and as each tree can secrete from the soil the elements that form a peach, a lemon, or a cocoa-nut, according to its kind, so individ-

ual men have secret senses, each some incommunicable sagacity. And men are primary or secondary as their opinions and actions are organic or not.

I know well what a sieve every ear is. Teach me never so much and I hear or retain only that which I wish to hear, what comports with my experience and my desire. Many eyes go through the meadow, but few see the flowers. A hunter finds plenty of game on the ground you have sauntered over with idle gun. White huckleberries are so rare that in miles of pasture you shall not find a dozen. But a girl who understands it will find you a pint in a quarter of an hour.

Though the world is full of food we can take only the crumbs fit for us. The air rings with sounds, but only a few vibrations can reach our tympanum. Perhaps creatures live with us which we never see, because their motion is too swift for our vision. The sun may shine, or a galaxy of suns ; you will get no more light than your eye will hold. What can Plato or Newton teach, if you are deaf or incapable ? A mind does not receive truth as a chest receives jewels that are put into it, but as the stomach takes up food into the system. It is no longer food, but flesh, and is assimilated. The appetite and the power of digestion measure our right to knowledge. He has it who can use it. As soon as our accumulation overruns our invention or power to use, the evils of intellectual gluttony begin,— congestion of the brain, apoplexy and strangulation.

III. In reckoning the sources of our mental power it were fatal to omit that one which pours all the others into its mould ; — that unknown country in which all the rivers of our knowledge have their fountains,

and which, by its qualities and structure, determines both the nature of the waters and the direction in which they flow.

The healthy mind lies parallel to the currents of nature and sees things in place, or makes discoveries. Newton did not exercise more ingenuity but less than another to see the world. Right thought comes spontaneously, comes like the morning wind ; comes daily, like our daily bread, to humble service ; comes duly to those who look for it. It does not need to pump your brains and force thought to think rightly. O no, the ingenious person is warped by his ingenuity and missees.

Instinct is our name for the potential wit. Each man has a feeling that what is done anywhere is done by the same wit as his. All men are his representatives, and he is glad to see that his wit can work at this or that problem as it ought to be done, and better than he could do it. We feel as if one man wrote all the books, painted, built, in dark ages ; and we are sure that it can do more than ever was done. It was the same mind that built the world. That is Instinct.

Ask what the Instinct declares, and we have little to say. He is no newsmonger, no disputant, no talker. 'T is a taper, a spark in the great night. Yet a spark at which all the illuminations of human arts and sciences were kindled. This is that glimpse of inextinguishable light by which men are guided ; though it does not show objects, yet it shows the way. This is that sense by which men feel when they are wronged, though they do not see how. This is that source of thought and feeling which acts on masses of men, on all men at certain times, with resistless power. Ever at

intervals leaps a word or fact to light which is no man's invention, but the common instinct, making the revolutions that never go back.

This is Instinct, and Inspiration is only this power excited, breaking its silence ; the spark bursting into flame. Instinct is a shapeless giant in the cave, massive, without hands or fingers or articulating lips or teeth or tongue ; Behemoth, disdaining speech, disdaining particulars, lurking, surly, invincible, disdaining thoughts, always whole, never distributed, aboriginal, old as nature, and saying, like poor Topsy, "never was born, growed." Indifferent to the dignity of its function, it plays the god in animal nature as in human or as in the angelic, and spends its omniscience on the lowest wants. The old Hindoo Gautama says, "Like the approach of the iron to the loadstone is the approach of the new-born child to the breast." There is somewhat awful in that first approach.

The Instinct begins at this low point, at the surface of the earth, and works for the necessities of the human being ; then ascends step by step to suggestions which are when expressed the intellectual and moral laws.

The mythology cleaves close to nature ; and what else was it they represented in Pan, god of shepherds, who was not yet completely finished in god-like form, blocked rather, and wanting the extremities ; had emblematic horns and feet ? Pan, that is, All. His habit was to dwell in mountains, lying on the ground, tooting like a cricket in the sun, refusing to speak, clinging to his behemoth ways. He could intoxicate by the strain of his shepherd's pipe, — silent yet to most, for his pipes make the music of the spheres, which because it

sounds eternally is not heard at all by the dull, but only by the mind. He wears a coat of leopard spots or stars. He could terrify by earth-born fears called *panics*. Yet was he in the secret of nature and could look both before and after. He was only seen under disguises, and was not represented by any outward image ; a terror sometimes, at others a placid omnipotence.

Such homage did the Greek, delighting in accurate form, not fond of the extravagant and unbounded, pay to the inscrutable force we call Instinct, or nature when it first becomes intelligent.

The action of the Instinct is for the most part negative, regulative, rather than initiative or impulsive. But it has a range as wide as human nature, running over all the ground of morals, of intellect, and of sense. In its lower function, when it deals with the apparent world, it is common-sense. It requires the performance of all that is needful to the animal life and health. Then it requires a proportion between a man's acts and his condition, requires all that is called humanity ; that symmetry and connection which is imperative in all healthily constituted men, and the want of which the rare and brilliant sallies of irregular genius cannot excuse.

If we could retain our early innocence we might trust our feet uncommanded to take the right path to our friend in the woods. But we have interfered too often ; the feet have lost, by our distrust, their proper virtue, and we take the wrong path and miss him. 'T is the barbarian instinct within us which culture deadens.

We find ourselves expressed in nature, but we can-

not translate it into words. But Perception is the armed eye. A civilization has tamed and ripened this savage wit, and he is a Greek. His Aye and No have become nouns and verbs and adverbs. Perception differs from Instinct by adding the Will. Simple percipiency is the virtue of space, not of man.

The senses minister to a mind they do not know. At a moment in our history the mind's eye opens and we become aware of spiritual facts, of rights, of duties, of thoughts, — a thousand faces of one essence. We call the essence Truth ; the particular aspects of it we call thoughts. These facts, this essence, are not new ; they are old and eternal, but our seeing of them is new. Having seen them we are no longer brute lumps whirled by Fate, but we pass into the council-chamber and government of nature. In so far as we see them we share their life and sovereignty.

The point of interest is here, that these gates, once opened, never swing back. The observers may come at their leisure, and do at last satisfy themselves of the fact. The thought, the doctrine, the right hitherto not affirmed is published in set propositions, in conversation of scholars and philosophers, of men of the world, and at last in the very choruses of songs. The young hear it, and as they have never fought it, never known it otherwise, they accept it, vote for it at the polls, embody it in the laws. And the perception thus satisfied reacts on the senses, to clarify them, so that it becomes more indisputable.

This is the first property of the Intellect I am to point out ; the mind detaches. A man is intellectual in proportion as he can make an object of every sensa-

tion, perception and intuition ; so long as he has no engagement in any thought or feeling which can hinder him from looking at it as somewhat foreign.

A man of talent has only to name any form or fact with which we are most familiar, and the strong light which he throws on it enhances it to all eyes. People wonder they never saw it before. The detachment consists in seeing it under a new order, not under a personal but under a universal light. To us it had economic, but to the universe it has poetic relations, and it is as good as sun and star now. Indeed this is the measure of all intellectual power among men, the power to complete this detachment, the power of genius to hurl a new individual into the world.

An intellectual man has the power to go out of himself and see himself as an object ; therefore his defects and delusions interest him as much as his successes. He not only wishes to succeed in life, but he wishes in thought to know the history and destiny of a man ; whilst the cloud of egotists drifting about are only interested in a success to their egotism.

The senses report the new fact or change ; the mind discovers some essential copula binding this fact or change to a class of facts or changes, and enjoys the discovery as if coming to its own again. A perception is always a generalization. It lifts the object, whether in material or moral nature, into a type. The animal, the low degrees of intellect, know only individuals. The philosopher knows only laws. That is, he considers a purely mental fact, part of the soul itself. We say with Kenelm Digby, "All things that she knoweth are herself, and she is all that she knoweth." Insight assimilates the thing seen. Is it only another way of

affirming and illustrating this to say that it sees nothing alone, but sees each particular object in just connections, — sees all in God ? In all healthy souls is an inborn necessity of presupposing for each particular fact a prior Being which compels it to a harmony with all other natures. The game of Intellect is the perception that whatever befalls or can be stated is a universal proposition ; and contrariwise, that every general statement is poetical again by being particularized or impersonated.

A single thought has no limit to its value ; a thought, properly speaking, — that is a truth held not from any man's saying so, or any accidental benefit or recommendation it has in our trade or circumstance, but because we have perceived it is a fact in the nature of things, and in all times and places will and must be the same thing, — is of inestimable value. Every new impression on the mind is not to be derided, but is to be accounted for, and, until accounted for, registered as an indisputable addition to our catalogue of natural facts.

The first fact is the fate in every mental perception, — that my seeing this or that, and that I see it so or so, is as much a fact in the natural history of the world as is the freezing of water at thirty-two degrees of Fahrenheit. My percipiency affirms the presence and perfection of law, as much as all the martyrs. A perception, it is of a necessity older than the sun and moon, and the Father of the Gods. It is there with all its destinies. It is its nature to rush to expression, to rush to embody itself. It is impatient to put on its sandals and be gone on its errand, which is to lead to a larger perception, and so to new action. For thought

exists to be expressed. That which cannot externize itself is not thought.

Do not trifle with your perceptions, or hold them cheap. They are your door to the seven heavens, and if you pass it by you will miss your way. Say, what impresses me ought to impress me. I am bewildered by the immense variety of attractions and cannot take a step ; but this one thread, fine as gossamer, is yet real ; and I hear a whisper, which I dare trust, that it is the thread on which the earth and the heaven of heavens are strung.

The universe is traversed by paths or bridges or stepping-stones across the gulfs of space in every direction. To every soul that is created is its path, invisible to all but itself. Each soul, therefore, walking in its own path walks firmly ; and to the astonishment of all other souls, who see not its path, it goes as softly and playfully on its way as if, instead of being a line, narrow as the edge of a sword, over terrific pits right and left, it were a wide prairie.

Genius is a delicate sensibility to the laws of the world, adding the power to express them again in some new form. The highest measure of poetic power is such insight and faculty to fuse the circumstances of to-day as shall make transparent the whole web of circumstance and opinion in which the man finds himself, so that he releases himself from the traditions in which he grew, — no longer looks back to Hebrew or Greek or English use or tradition in religion, laws, or life, but sees so truly the omnipresence of eternal cause that he can convert the daily and hourly event of New York, of Boston, into universal symbols. I owe to genius always the same debt, of lifting the curtain from the

common and showing me that gods are sitting disguised in every company.

The conduct of Intellect must respect nothing so much as preserving the sensibility. My measure for all subjects of science as of events is their impression on the soul. That mind is best which is most impressionable. There are times when the cawing of a crow, a weed, a snow-flake, a boy's willow whistle, or a farmer planting in his field is more suggestive to the mind than the Yosemite gorge or the Vatican would be in another hour. In like mood an old verse, or certain words, gleam with rare significance.

But sensibility does not exhaust our idea of it. That is only half. Genius is not a lazy angel contemplating itself and things. It is insatiable for expression. Thought must take the stupendous step of passing into realization. A master can formulate his thought. Our thoughts at first possess us. Later, if we have good heads, we come to possess them. We believe that certain persons add to the common vision a certain degree of control over these states of mind ; that the true scholar is one who has the power to stand beside his thoughts or to hold off his thoughts at arm's length and give them perspective.

It is not to be concealed that the gods have guarded this privilege with costly penalty. This slight discontinuity which perception effects between the mind and the object paralyzes the will. If you cut or break in two a block or stone and press the two parts closely together, you can indeed bring the particles very near, but never again so near that they shall attract each other so that you can take up the block as one. That

indescribably small interval is as good as a thousand miles, and has forever severed the practical unity. Such is the immense deduction from power by discontinuity.

The intellect that sees the interval partakes of it, and the fact of intellectual perception severs once for all the man from the things with which he converses. Affection blends, intellect disjoins subject and object. For weal or woe we clear ourselves from the thing we contemplate. We grieve but are not the grief ; we love but are not love. If we converse with low things, with crimes, with mischances, we are not compromised. And if with high things, with heroic actions, with virtues, the interval becomes a gulf and we cannot enter into the highest good. Artist natures do not weep. Goethe, the surpassing intellect of modern times, apprehends the spiritual but is not spiritual.

There is indeed this vice about men of thought, that you cannot quite trust them ; not as much as other men of the same natural probity, without intellect ; because they have a hankering to play Providence and make a distinction in favor of themselves from the rules they apply to the human race.

The primary rule for the conduct of Intellect is to have control of the thoughts without losing their natural attitudes and action. They are the oracle ; we are not to poke and drill and force, but to follow them. Yet the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. You must formulate your thought or 't is all sky and no stars. There are men of great apprehension, discursive minds, who easily entertain ideas, but are not exact, severe with themselves, cannot connect

or arrange their thoughts so as effectively to report them. A blending of these two — the intellectual perception of truth and the moral sentiment of right — is wisdom. All thought is practical. Wishing is one thing ; will another. Wishing is castle-building ; the dreaming about things agreeable to the senses, but to which we have no right. Will is the advance to that which rightly belongs to us, to which the inward magnet ever points, and which we dare to make ours. The revelation of thought takes us out of servitude into freedom. So does the sense of right.

Will is the measure of power. To a great genius there must be a great will. If the thought is not a lamp to the will, does not proceed to an act, the wise are imbecile. He alone is strong and happy who has a will. The rest are herds. He uses ; they are used. He is of the Maker ; they are of the Made.

Will is always miraculous, being the presence of God to men. When it appears in a man he is a hero, and all metaphysics are at fault. Heaven is the exercise of the faculties, the added sense of power.

All men know the truth, but what of that ? It is rare to find one who knows how to speak it. A man tries to speak it and his voice is like the hiss of a snake, or rude and chiding. The truth is not spoken but injured. The same thing happens in power to do the right. His rectitude is ridiculous. His organs do not play him true.

There is a meter which determines the constructive power of man, — this, namely, the question whether the mind possesses the control of its thoughts, or they of it. The new sect stands for certain thoughts. We go to individual members for an exposition of them.

Vain expectation. They are possessed by the ideas but do not possess them. One meets contemplative men who dwell in a certain feeling and delight which are intellectual but wholly above their expression. They cannot formulate. They impress those who know them by their loyalty to the truth they worship but cannot impart. Sometimes the patience and love are rewarded by the chamber of power being at last opened; but sometimes they pass away dumb, to find it where all obstruction is removed.

By and by comes a facility; some one that can move the mountain and build of it a causeway through the Dismal Swamp, as easily as he carries the hair on his head. Talent is habitual facility of execution. We like people who can do things. The various talents are organic, or each related to that part of nature it is to explore and utilize. Somewhat is to come to the light, and one was created to fetch it, — a vessel of honor or of dishonor. 'T is of instant use in the economy of the Cosmos, and the more armed and biassed for the work the better.

Each of these talents is born to be unfolded and set at work for the use and delight of men, and, in the last result, the man with the talent is the need of mankind; the whole ponderous machinery of the state has really for its aim just to place this skill of each.

But idea and execution are not often entrusted to the same head. There is some incompatibility of good speculation and practice, for example, the failure of monasteries and Brook Farms. To hammer out phalanxes must be done by smiths; as soon as the scholar attempts it he is half a charlatan.

The grasp is the main thing. Most men's minds do

not grasp anything. All slips through their fingers, like the paltry brass grooves that in most country houses are used to raise or drop the curtain, but are made to sell, and will not hold any curtain but cobwebs. I have heard that idiot children are known from their birth by the circumstance that their hands do not close round anything. Webster naturally and always grasps, and therefore retains something from every company and circumstance.

As a talent Dante's imagination is the nearest to hands and feet that we have seen. He clasps the thought as if it were a tree or a stone, and describes as mathematically. I once found Page the painter modelling his figures in clay, Ruth and Naomi, before he painted them on canvas. Dante, one would say, did the same thing before he wrote the verses.

I have spoken of Intellect constructive. But it is in degrees. How it moves when its pace is accelerated! The pace of Nature is so slow. Why not from strength to strength, from miracle to miracle, and not as now with this retardation — as if Nature had sprained her foot — and plenteous stopping at little stations?

The difference is obvious enough in Talent between the speed of one man's action above another's. In debate, in legislature, not less in action; in war or in affairs, alike daring and effective. But I speak of it in quite another sense, namely, in the habitual speed of combination of thought.

The same functions which are perfect in our quadrupeds are seen slower performed in palæontology. Many races it cost them to achieve the completion that is now in the life of one. Life had not yet so fierce a glow.

Shakespeare astonishes by his equality in every play, act, scene or line. One would say he must have been a thousand years old when he wrote his first line, so thoroughly is his thought familiar to him, and has such scope and so solidly worded, as if it were already a proverb and not hereafter to become one. Well, that millennium in effect is really only a little acceleration in his process of thought.

But each power is commonly at the expense of some other. When pace is increased it will happen that the control is in a degree lost. Reason does not keep her firm seat. The Delphian prophetess, when the spirit possesses her, is herself a victim. The excess of individualism, when it is not corrected or subordinated to the Supreme Reason, makes that vice which we stigmatize as monotones, men of one idea, or, as the French say, *enfant perdu d'une conviction isolée*, which give such a comic tinge to all society. Every man has his theory, true, but ridiculously overstated. We are forced to treat a great part of mankind as if they were a little deranged. We detect their mania and humor it, so that conversation soon becomes a tiresome effort.

You laugh at the monotones, at the men of one idea, but if we look nearly at heroes we may find the same poverty ; and perhaps it is not poverty, but power. The secret of power, intellectual or physical, is concentration, and all concentration involves of necessity a certain narrowness. It is a law of nature that he who looks at one thing must turn his eyes from every other thing in the universe. The horse goes better with blinders, and the man for dedication to his task. If you ask what compensation is made for the inevitable narrowness, why, this, that in learning one thing well you learn all things.

Immense is the patience of Nature. You say thought is a penurious rill. Well, we can wait. Nature is immortal, and can wait. Nature having for capital this rill, drop by drop, as it trickles from the rock of ages, — this rill and her patience, — she husbands and hives, she forms reservoirs, were it only a phial or a hair-tube that will hold as it were a drop of attar. Not having enough to support all the powers of a race, she thins her stock and raises a few individuals, or only a pair. Not sufficing to feed all the faculties synchronously, she feeds one faculty and starves all the rest. I am familiar with cases, we meet them daily, wherein the vital force being insufficient for the constitution, everything is neglected that can be spared ; some one power fed, all the rest pine. 'T is like a withered hand or leg on a Hercules. It makes inconvenience in society, for we presume symmetry, and because they know one thing we defer to them in another, and find them really contemptible. We can't make half a bow and say, I honor and despise you. But Nature can ; she whistles with all her winds, and does as she pleases.

It is much to write sentences ; it is more to add method and write out the spirit of your life symmetrically. But to arrange general reflections in their natural order, so that I shall have one homogeneous piece, — a Lycidas, an Allegro, a Hamlet, a Midsummer Night's Dream, — this continuity is for the great. The wonderful men are wonderful hereby. Such concentration of experiences is in every great work, which, though successive in the mind of the master, were primarily combined in his piece.

But what we want is consecutiveness. 'T is with us a flash of light, then a long darkness, then a flash again. Ah ! could we turn these fugitive sparkles into an astronomy of Copernican worlds.

I must think this keen sympathy, this thrill of awe with which we watch the performance of genius, a sign of our own readiness to exert the like power. I must think we are entitled to powers far transcending any that we possess ; that we have in the race the sketch of a man which no individual comes up to.

Every sincere man is right, or, to make him right, only needs a little larger dose of his own personality. Excellent in his own way by means of not apprehending the gift of another. When he speaks out of another's mind, we detect it. He can't make any paint stick but his own. No man passes for that with another which he passes for with himself. The respect and the censure of his brother are alike injurious and irrelevant. We see ourselves ; we lack organs to see others, and only squint at them.

Don't fear to push these individualities to their farthest divergence. Characters and talents are complemental and suppletory. The world stands by balanced antagonisms. The more the peculiarities are pressed the better the result. The air would rot without lightning ; and without the violence of direction that men have, without bigots, without men of fixed idea, no excitement, no efficiency.

The novelist should not make any character act absurdly, but only absurdly as seen by others. For it is so in life. Nonsense will not keep its unreason if you come into the humorist's point of view, but unhappily

we find it is fast becoming sense, and we must flee again into the distance if we would laugh.

What strength belongs to every plant and animal in nature. The tree or the brook has no duplicity, no pretentiousness, no show. It is, with all its might and main, what it is, and makes one and the same impression and effect at all times. All the thoughts of a turtle are turtles, and of a rabbit, rabbits. But a man is broken and dissipated by the giddiness of his will; he does not throw himself into his judgments; his genius leads him one way but 't is likely his trade or politics in quite another. He rows with one hand and with the other backs water, and does not give to any manner of life the strength of his constitution. Hence the perpetual loss of power and waste of human life.

The natural remedy against this miscellany of knowledge and aim, this desultory universality of ours, this immense ground-juniper falling abroad and not gathered up into any columnar tree, is to substitute realism for sentimentalism; a certain recognition of the simple and terrible laws which, seen or unseen, pervade and govern.

You will say this is quite axiomatic and a little too true. I do not find it an agreed point. Literary men for the most part have a settled despair as to the realization of ideas in their own time. There is in all students a distrust of truth, a timidity about affirming it; a wish to patronize Providence.

We disown our debt to moral evil. To science there is no poison; to botany no weed; to chemistry no dirt. The curses of malignity and despair are important criticism, which must be heeded until he can explain and rightly silence them.

"*Croyez moi, l'erreur aussi a son mérite,*" said Voltaire. We see those who surmount by dint of egotism or infatuation obstacles from which the prudent recoil. The right partisan is a heady man, who, because he does not see many things, sees some one thing with heat and exaggeration ; and if he falls among other narrow men, or objects which have a brief importance, prefers it to the universe, and seems inspired and a godsend to those who wish to magnify the matter and carry a point. 'T is the difference between progress by railroad and by walking across the broken country. Immense speed, but only in one direction.

There are two theories of life ; one for the demonstration of our talent, the other for the education of the man. One is activity, the busy-body, the following of that practical talent which we have, in the belief that what is so natural, easy and pleasant to us and desirable to others will surely lead us out safely ; in this direction lie usefulness, comfort, society, low power of all sorts. The other is trust, religion, consent to be nothing for eternity, entranced waiting, the worship of ideas. This is solitary, grand, secular. They are in perpetual balance and strife. One is talent, the other genius. One is skill, the other character.

We are continually tempted to sacrifice genius to talent, the hope and promise of insight to the lust of a freer demonstration of those gifts we have ; and we buy this freedom to glitter by the loss of general health.

It is the levity of this country to forgive everything to talent. If a man show cleverness, rhetorical skill, bold front in the forum or the senate, people clap their

hands without asking more. We have a juvenile love of smartness, of showy speech. We like faculty that can rapidly be coined into money, and society seems to be in conspiracy to utilize every gift prematurely, and pull down genius to lucrative talent. Every kind of meanness and mischief is forgiven to intellect. All is condoned if I can write a good song or novel.

Wide is the gulf between genius and talent. The men we know, poets, wits, writers, deal with their thoughts as jewellers with jewels, which they sell but must not wear. Like the carpenter, who gives up the key of the fine house he has built, and never enters it again.

There is a conflict between a man's private dexterity or talent and his access to the free air and light which wisdom is ; between wisdom and the habit and necessity of repeating itself which belongs to every mind. Peter is the mould into which everything is poured like warm wax, and be it astronomy or railroads or French revolution or theology or botany, it comes out Peter. But there are quick limits to our interest in the personality of people. They are as much alike as their barns and pantries, and are as soon musty and dreary. They entertain us for a time, but at the second or third encounter we have nothing more to learn.

The daily history of the Intellect is this alternating of expansions and concentrations. The expansions are the invitations from heaven to try a larger sweep, a higher pitch than we have yet climbed, and to leave all our past for this enlarged scope. Present power, on the other hand, requires concentration on the moment and the thing to be done.

The condition of sanity is to respect the order of the intellectual world ; to keep down talent in its place, to enthrone the instinct. There must be perpetual rallying and self-recovery. Each talent is ambitious and self-asserting ; it works for show and for the shop, and the greater it grows the more is the mischief and the misleading, so that presently all is wrong.

No wonder the children love masks and costumes, and play horse, play soldier, play school, play bear, and delight in theatricals. The children have only the instinct of the universe, in which becoming somewhat else is the perpetual game of nature, and death the penalty of standing still. 'T is not less in thought. I cannot conceive any good in a thought which confines and stagnates. The universe exists only in transit, or we behold it shooting the gulf from the past to the future. We are passing into new heavens in fact by the movement of our solar system, and in thought by our better knowledge. Transition is the attitude of power. A fact is only a fulcrum of the spirit. It is the terminus of a past thought, but only a means now to new sallies of the imagination and new progress of wisdom. The habit of saliency, of not pausing but proceeding, is a sort of importation and domestication of the divine effort into a man. Routine, the rut, is the path of indolence, of cows, of sluggish animal life ; as near gravitation as it can go. But wit sees the short way, puts together what belongs together, custom or no custom ; in that is organization.

Inspiration is the continuation of the divine effort that built the man. The same course continues itself in the mind which we have witnessed in nature, namely,

the carrying-on and completion of the metamorphosis from grub to worm, from worm to fly. In human thought this process is often arrested for years and ages. The history of mankind is the history of arrested growth. This premature stop, I know not how, befalls most of us in early youth ; as if the growth of high powers, the access to rare truths, closed at two or three years in the child, while all the pagan faculties went ripening on to sixty.

So long as you are capable of advance, so long you have not abdicated the hope and future of a divine soul. That wonderful oracle will reply when it is consulted, and there is no history or tradition, no rule of life or art or science, on which it is not a competent and the only competent judge.

Man was made for conflict, not for rest. In action is his power ; not in his goals but in his transitions man is great. Instantly he is dwarfed by self-indulgence. The truest state of mind rested in becomes false.

The spiritual power of man is twofold, mind and heart, Intellect and morals ; one respecting truth, the other the will. One is the man, the other the woman in spiritual nature. One is power, the other is love. These elements always coexist in every normal individual, but one predominates. And as each is easily exalted in our thoughts till it serves to fill the universe and become the synonym of God, the soul in which one predominates is ever watchful and jealous when such immense claims are made for one as seem injurious to the other. Ideal and practical, like ecliptic and equator, are never parallel. Each has its vices, its proper dangers, obvious enough when the opposite element is deficient.

Intellect is skeptical, runs down into talent, selfish working for private ends, conceited, ostentatious and malignant. On the other side the clear-headed thinker complains of souls led hither and thither by affections which, alone, are blind guides and thriftless workmen, and in the confusion asks the polarity of intellect. But all great minds and all great hearts have mutually allowed the absolute necessity of the twain.

If the first rule is to obey your genius, in the second place the good mind is known by the choice of what is positive, of what is advancing. We must embrace the affirmative. But the affirmative of affirmatives is love. *Quantus amor tantus animus.* Strength enters as the moral element enters. Lovers of men are as safe as the sun. Goodwill makes insight. Sensibility is the secret readiness to believe in all kinds of power, and the contempt of any experience we have not is the opposite pole. The measure of mental health is the disposition to find good everywhere, good and order, analogy, health and benefit, — the love of truth, tendency to be in the right, no fighter for victory, no cockerel.

We have all of us by nature a certain divination and parturient vaticination in our minds of some higher good and perfection than either power or knowledge. Knowledge is plainly to be preferred before power, as being that which guides and directs its blind force and impetus ; but Aristotle declares that the origin of reason is not reason but something better.

The height of culture, the highest behavior, consists in the identification of the Ego with the universe ; so that when a man says I hope, I find, I think, he might properly say, The human race thinks or finds or hopes.

And meantime he shall be able continually to keep sight of his biographical Ego, — I have a desk, I have an office, I am hungry, I had an ague, — as rhetoric or offset to his grand spiritual Ego, without impertinence, or ever confounding them.

I may well say this is divine, the continuation of the divine effort. Alas ! it seems not to be ours, to be quite independent of us. Often there is so little affinity between the man and his works that we think the wind must have writ them. Also its communication from one to another follows its own law and refuses our intrusion. It is in one, it belongs to all ; yet how to impart it ?

We need all our resources to live in the world which is to be used and decorated by us. Socrates kept all his virtues as well as his faculties well in hand. He was sincerely humble, but he utilized his humanity chiefly as a better eyeglass to penetrate the vapors that baffled the vision of other men.

The superiority of the man is in the simplicity of his thought, that he has no obstruction, but looks straight at the pure fact, with no color of option. Profound sincerity is the only basis of talent as of character. The virtue of the Intellect is its own, its courage is of its own kind, and at last it will be justified, though for the moment it seem hostile to what it most reveres.

We wish to sum up the conflicting impressions by saying that all point at last to a unity which inspires all. Our poetry, our religion are its skirts and penumbræ. Yet the charm of life is the hints we derive from this. They overcome us like perfumes from a

far-off shore of sweetness, and their meaning is that no tongue shall syllable it without leave ; that only itself can name it ; that by casting ourselves on it and being its voice it rushes each moment to positive commands, creating men and methods, and ties the will of a child to the love of the First Cause.

MEMORY.

MEMORY.

MEMORY is a primary and fundamental faculty, without which none other can work ; the cement, the bitumen, the matrix in which the other faculties are imbedded ; or it is the thread on which the beads of man are strung, making the personal identity which is necessary to moral action. Without it all life and thought were an unrelated succession. As gravity holds matter from flying off into space, so memory gives stability to knowledge ; it is the cohesion which keeps things from falling into a lump, or flowing in waves.

We like longevity, we like signs of riches and extent of nature in an individual. And most of all we like a great memory. The lowest life remembers. The sparrow, the ant, the worm, have the same memory as we. If you bar their path, or offer them somewhat disagreeable to their senses, they make one or two trials, and then once for all avoid it.

Every machine must be perfect of its sort. It is essential to a locomotive that it can reverse its movement, and run backward and forward with equal celerity. The builder of the mind found it not less needful that it should have retroaction, and command its past

act and deed. Perception, though it were immense and could pierce through the universe, was not sufficient.

Memory performs the impossible for man by the strength of his divine arms ; holds together past and present, beholding both, existing in both, abides in the flowing, and gives continuity and dignity to human life. It holds us to our family, to our friends. Hereby a home is possible ; hereby only a new fact has value.

Opportunities of investment are useful only to those who have capital. Any piece of knowledge I acquire to-day, a fact that falls under my eyes, a book I read, a piece of news I hear, has a value at this moment exactly proportioned to my skill to deal with it. To-morrow, when I know more, I recall that piece of knowledge and use it better.

The Past has a new value every moment to the active mind, through the incessant purification and better method of its memory. Once it joined its facts by color and form and sensuous relations. Some fact that had a childish significance to your childhood and was a type in the nursery, when riper intelligence recalls it means more and serves you better as an illustration ; and perhaps in your age has new meaning. What was an isolated, unrelated belief or conjecture, our later experience instructs us how to place in just connection with other views which confirm and expand it. The old whim or perception was an augury of a broader insight, at which we arrive later with securer conviction. This is the companion, this the tutor, the poet, the library, with which you travel. It does not lie, cannot be corrupted, reports to you not what you wish but what really befel. You say, "I can never think of some act of neglect, of selfishness, or of passion with-

out pain." Well, that is as it should be. That is the police of the Universe : the angels are set to punish you, so long as you are capable of such crime. But in the history of character the day comes when you are incapable of such crime. Then you suffer no more, you look on it as heaven looks on it, with wonder at the deed, and with applause at the pain it has cost you.

Memory is not a pocket, but a living instructor, with a prophetic sense of the values which he guards ; a guardian angel set there within you to record your life, and by recording to animate you to uplift it. It is a scripture written day by day from the birth of the man ; all its records full of meanings which open as he lives on, explaining each other, explaining the world to him and expanding their sense as he advances, until it shall become the whole law of nature and life.

As every creature is furnished with teeth to seize and eat, and with stomach to digest its food, so the memory is furnished with a perfect apparatus. There is no book like the memory, none with such a good index, and that of every kind, alphabetic, systematic, arranged by names of persons, by colors, tastes, smells, shapes, likeness, unlikeness, by all sorts of mysterious hooks and eyes to catch and hold, and contrivances for giving a hint.

The memory collects and re-collects. We figure it as if the mind were a kind of looking-glass, which being carried through the street of time receives on its clear plate every image that passes ; only with this difference that our plate is iodized so that every image sinks into it, and is held there. But in addition to this property it has one more, this, namely, that of all

the million images that are imprinted, the very one we want reappears in the centre of the plate in the moment when we want it.

We can tell much about it, but you must not ask us what it is. On seeing a face I am aware that I have seen it before, or that I have not seen it before. On hearing a fact told I am aware that I knew it already. You say the first words of the old song, and I finish the line and the stanza. But where I have them, or what becomes of them when I am not thinking of them for months and years, that they should lie so still, as if they did not exist, and yet so nigh that they come on the instant when they are called for, never any man was so sharp-sighted, or could turn himself inside out quick enough to find.

'T is because of the believed incompatibility of the affirmative and advancing attitude of the mind with tenacious acts of recollection that people are often reproached with living in their memory. Late in life we live by memory, and in our solstices or periods of stagnation ; as the starved camel in the desert lives on his humps. Memory was called by the schoolmen *vespertina cognitio*, evening knowledge, in distinction from the command of the future which we have by the knowledge of causes, and which they called *matutina cognitio*, or morning knowledge.

Am I asked whether the thoughts clothe themselves in words ? I answer, Yes, always ; but they are apt to be instantly forgotten. Never was truer fable than that of the Sibyl's writing on leaves which the wind scatters. The difference between men is that in one the memory with inconceivable swiftness flies after and re-collects the flying leaves,— flies on wing as fast as

that mysterious whirlwind, and the envious Fate is baffled.

This command of old facts, the clear beholding at will of what is best in our experience, is our splendid privilege. "He who calls what is vanished back again into being enjoys a bliss like that of creating," says Niebuhr. The memory plays a great part in settling the intellectual rank of men. We estimate a man by how much he remembers. A seneschal of Parnassus is Mnemosyne. This power will alone make a man remarkable; and it is found in all good wits. Therefore the poets represented the Muses as the daughters of Memory, for the power exists in some marked and eminent degree in men of an ideal determination. Quintilian reckoned it the measure of genius. "Tantum ingenii quantum memoriæ."

We are told that Boileau having recited to Daguesseau one day an epistle or satire he had just been composing, Daguesseau tranquilly told him he knew it already, and in proof set himself to recite it from end to end. Boileau, astonished, was much distressed until he perceived that it was only a feat of memory.

The mind disposes all its experience after its affection and to its ruling end; one man by puns and one by cause and effect, one to heroic benefit and one to wrath and animal desire. This is the high difference, the quality of the association by which a man remembers. In the minds of most men memory is nothing but a farm-book or a pocket-diary. On such a day I paid my note; on the next day the cow calved; on the next I cut my finger; on the next the banks suspended payment. But another man's memory is the history of science and art and civility and thought; and

still another deals with laws and perceptions that are the theory of the world.

This thread or order of remembering, this classification, distributes men, one remembering by shop-rule or interest ; one by passion ; one by trifling external marks, as dress or money. And one rarely takes an interest in how the facts really stand, in the order of cause and effect, without self-reference. This is an intellectual man. Nature interests him ; a plant, a fish, time, space, mind, being, in their own method and law. Napoleon was such, and that saves him.

But this mysterious power that binds our life together has its own vagaries and interruptions. It sometimes occurs that memory has a personality of its own and volunteers or refuses its informations at its will, not at mine. One sometimes asks himself, Is it possible that it is only a visitor, not a resident ? Is it some old aunt who goes in and out of the house, and occasionally recites anecdotes of old times and persons which I recognize as having heard before, and she being gone again I search in vain for any trace of the anecdotes ?

We can help ourselves to the *modus* of mental processes only by coarse material experiences. A knife with a good spring, a forceps whose lips accurately meet and match, a steel-trap, a loom, a watch, the teeth or jaws of which fit and play perfectly, as compared with the same tools when badly put together, describe to us the difference between a person of quick and strong perception, like Franklin or Swift or Webster or Richard Owen, and a heavy man who witnesses the same facts or shares experiences like theirs. 'T is like the impression made by the same stamp in

sand or in wax. The way in which Burke or Sheridan or Webster or any orator surprises us is by his always having a sharp tool that fits the present use. He has an old story, an odd circumstance, that illustrates the point he is now proving, and is better than an argument. The more he is heated, the wider he sees ; he seems to remember all he ever knew ; thus certifying us that he is in the habit of seeing better than other people ; that what his mind grasps it does not let go. 'T is the bull-dog bite ; you must cut off the head to loosen the teeth.

We hate this fatal shortness of Memory, these docked men whom we behold. We gathered up what a rolling snow-ball as we came along, — much of it professedly for the future, as capital stock of knowledge. Where is it now ? Look behind you. I cannot see that your train is any longer than it was in childhood. The facts of the last two or three days or weeks are all you have with you, — the reading of the last month's books. Your conversation, action, your face and manners report of no more, of no greater wealth of mind. Alas ! you have lost something for everything you have gained, and cannot grow. Only so much iron will the load-stone draw ; it gains new particles all the way as you move it, but one falls off for every one that adheres.

As there is strength in the wild horse which is never regained when he is once broken by training, and as there is a sound sleep of children and of savages, profound as the hibernation of bears, which never visits the eyes of civil gentlemen and ladies, so there is a wild memory in children and youth which makes what is early learned impossible to forget ; and perhaps in

the beginning of the world it had most vigor. Plato deplores writing as a barbarous invention which would weaken the memory by disuse. The Rhapsodists in Athens it seems could recite at once any passage of Homer that was desired.

If writing weakens the memory, we may say as much and more of printing. What is the newspaper but a sponge or invention for oblivion? the rule being that for every fact added to the memory, one is crowded out, and that only what the affection animates can be remembered.

The mind has a better secret in generalization than merely adding units to its list of facts. The reason of the short memory is shallow thought. As deep as the thought, so great is the attraction. An act of the understanding will marshal and concatenate a few facts; a principle of the reason will thrill and magnetize and redistribute the whole world.

But defect of memory is not always want of genius. By no means. It is sometimes owing to excellence of genius. Thus men of great presence of mind who are always equal to the occasion do not need to rely on what they have stored for use, but can think in this moment as well and deeply as in any past moment, and if they cannot remember the rule they can make one. Indeed it is remarked that inventive men have bad memories. Sir Isaac Newton was embarrassed when the conversation turned on his discoveries and results; he could not recall them; but if he was asked why things were so or so he could find the reason on the spot.

A man would think twice about learning a new science or reading a new paragraph, if he believed the

magnetism was only a constant amount, and that he lost a word or a thought for every word he gained. But the experience is not quite so bad. In reading a foreign language, every new word mastered is a lamp lighting up related words and so assisting the memory. Apprehension of the whole sentence aids to fix the precise meaning of a particular word, and what familiarity has been acquired with the genius of the language and the writer helps in fixing the exact meaning of the sentence. So is it with every fact in a new science : they are mutually explaining, and each one adds transparency to the whole mass.

The damages of forgetting are more than compensated by the large values which new thoughts and knowledge give to what we already know. If new impressions sometimes efface old ones, yet we steadily gain insight ; and because all nature has one law and meaning, — part corresponding to part, — all we have known aids us continually to the knowledge of the rest of nature. Thus, all the facts in this chest of memory are property at interest. And who shall set a boundary to this mounting value ? Shall we not on higher stages of being remember and understand our early history better ?

They say in Architecture, "An arch never sleeps ;" I say, the Past will not sleep, it works still. With every new fact a ray of light shoots up from the long buried years. Who can judge the new book ? He who has read many books. Who, the new assertion ? He who has heard many the like. Who, the new man ? He that has seen men. The experienced and cultivated man is lodged in a hall hung with pictures which every new day retouches, and to which every step in

the march of the soul adds a more sublime perspective.

We learn early that there is great disparity of value between our experiences ; some thoughts perish in the using. Some days are bright with thought and sentiment, and we live a year in a day. Yet these best days are not always those which memory can retain. This water once spilled cannot be gathered. There are more inventions in the thoughts of one happy day than ages could execute, and I suppose I speak the sense of most thoughtful men when I say, I would rather have a perfect recollection of all I have thought and felt in a day or a week of high activity than read all the books that have been published in a century.

The memory is one of the compensations which Nature grants to those who have used their days well ; when age and calamity have bereaved them of their limbs or organs, then they retreat on mental faculty and concentrate on that. The poet, the philosopher, lamed, old, blind, sick, yet disputing the ground inch by inch against fortune, finds a strength against the wrecks and decays sometimes more invulnerable than the heyday of youth and talent.

I value the praise of Memory. And how does Memory praise ? By holding fast the best. A thought takes its true rank in the memory by surviving other thoughts that were once preferred. Plato remembered Anaxagoras by one of his sayings. If we recall our own favorites we shall usually find that it is for one crowning act or thought that we hold them dear.

Have you not found memory an apotheosis or deification ? The poor, short, lone fact dies at the birth. Memory catches it up into her heaven, and bathes it in

immortal waters. Then a thousand times over it lives and acts again, each time transfigured, ennobled. In solitude, in darkness, we tread over again the sunny walks of youth ; confined now in populous streets you behold again the green fields, the shadows of the gray birches ; by the solitary river hear again the joyful voices of early companions, and vibrate anew to the tenderness and dainty music of the poetry your boyhood fed upon. At this hour the stream is still flowing, though you hear it not ; the plants are still drinking their accustomed life and repaying it with their beautiful forms. But you need not wander thither. It flows for you, and they grow for you, in the returning images of former summers. In low or bad company you fold yourself in your cloak, withdraw yourself entirely from all the doleful circumstance, recall and surround yourself with the best associates and the fairest hours of your life : —

"Passing sweet are the domains of tender memory."

You may perish out of your senses, but not out of your memory or imagination.

The memory has a fine art of sifting out the pain and keeping all the joy. The spring days when the bluebird arrives have usually only few hours of fine temperature, are sour and unlovely ; but when late in autumn we hear rarely a bluebird's notes they are sweet by reminding us of the spring. Well, it is so with other tricks of memory. Of the most romantic fact the memory is more romantic ; and this power of sinking the pain of any experience and of recalling the saddest with tranquillity, and even with a wise pleasure, is familiar. The memory is as the affection. Samp-

son Reed says, "The true way to store the memory is to develop the affections." A *souvenir* is a token of love. *Remember me* means, Do not cease to love me. We remember those things which we love and those things which we hate. The memory of all men is robust on the subject of a debt due to them, or of an insult inflicted on them. "They can remember," as Johnson said, "who kicked them last."

Every artist is alive on the subject of his art. The Persians say, "A real singer will never forget the song he has once learned." Michael Angelo, after having once seen a work of any other artist, would remember it so perfectly that if it pleased him to make use of any portion thereof, he could do so, but in such a manner that none could perceive it.

We remember what we understand, and we understand best what we like; for this doubles our power of attention, and makes it our own. Captain John Brown, of Ossawatomie, said he had in Ohio three thousand sheep on his farm, and could tell a strange sheep in his flock as soon as he saw its face. One of my neighbors, a grazier, told me that he should know again every cow, ox, or steer that he ever saw. Abel Lawton knew every horse that went up and down through Concord to the towns in the county. And in higher examples each man's memory is in the line of his action.

Nature trains us on to see illusions and prodigies with no more wonder than our toast and omelet at breakfast. Talk of memory and cite me these fine examples of Grotius and Daguesseau, and I think how awful is that power and what privilege and tyranny it must confer. Then I come to a bright school-girl who

remembers all she hears, carries thousands of nursery rhymes and all the poetry in all the readers, hymn-books, and pictorial ballads in her mind ; and 't is a mere drug. She carries it so carelessly, it seems like the profusion of hair on the shock heads of all the village boys and village dogs ; it grows like grass. 'T is a bushel-basket memory of all unchosen knowledge, heaped together in a huge hamper, without method, yet securely held, and ready to come at call ; so that an old scholar, who knows what to do with a memory, is full of wonder and pity that this magical force should be squandered on such frippery.

He is a skilful doctor who can give me a recipe for the cure of a bad memory. And yet we have some hints from experience on this subject. And first, *health.* It is found that we remember best when the head is clear, when we are thoroughly awake. When the body is in a quiescent state in the absence of the passions, in the moderation of food, it yields itself a willing medium to the intellect. For the true river Lethe is the body of man, with its belly and uproar of appetite and mountains of indigestion and bad humors and quality of darkness. And for this reason, and observing some mysterious continuity of mental operation during sleep or when our will is suspended, 't is an old rule of scholars, that which Fuller records, "'T is best knocking in the nail overnight and clinching it next morning." Only I should give extension to this rule and say Yes, drive the nail this week and clinch it the next, and drive it this year and clinch it the next.

But Fate also is an artist. We forget also according to beautiful laws. Thoreau said, "Of what significance are the things you can forget. A little thought is sexton to all the world."

We must be severe with ourselves, and what we wish to keep we must once thoroughly possess. Then the thing seen will no longer be what it was, a mere sensuous object before the eye or ear, but a reminder of its law, a possession for the intellect. Then we relieve ourselves of all task in the matter, we put the *onus* of being remembered on the object, instead of on our will. We shall do as we do with all our studies, prize the fact or the name of the person by that predominance it takes in our mind after near acquaintance. I have several times forgotten the name of Flamsteed, never that of Newton; and can drop easily many poets out of the Elizabethan chronology, but not Shakespeare.

We forget rapidly what should be forgotten. The *universal* sense of fables and anecdotes is marked by our tendency to forget name and date and geography. "How in the right are children," said Margaret Fuller, "to forget name and date and place."

You cannot overstate our debt to the past, but has the present no claim? This past memory is the baggage, but where is the troop? The divine gift is not the old but the new. The divine is the instant life that receives and uses, the life that can well bury the old in the omnipotency with which it makes all things new.

The acceleration of mental process is equivalent to the lengthening of life. If a great many thoughts pass through your mind you will believe a long time has elapsed, many hours or days. In dreams a rush of many thoughts, of seeming experiences, of spending hours and going through a great variety of actions and companies, and when we start up and look at the watch, instead of a long night we are surprised to find it was a short nap. The opium-eater says, "I sometimes seemed to have lived seventy or a hundred years in

one night." You know what is told of the experience of some persons who have been recovered from drowning. They relate that their whole life's history seemed to pass before them in review. They remembered in a moment all that they ever did.

If we occupy ourselves long on this wonderful faculty, and see the natural helps of it in the mind, and the way in which new knowledge calls upon old knowledge — new giving undreamed-of value to old ; everywhere relation and suggestion, so that what one had painfully held by strained attention and recapitulation now falls into place and is clamped and locked by inevitable connection as a planet in its orbit (every other orb, or the law or system of which it is a part, being a perpetual reminder), — we cannot fail to draw thence a sublime hint that thus there must be an endless increase in the power of memory only through its use ; that there must be a proportion between the power of memory and the amount of knowables ; and since the Universe opens to us, the reach of the memory must be as large.

With every broader generalization which the mind makes, with every deeper insight, its retrospect is also wider. With every new insight into the duty or fact of to-day we come into new possession of the past.

When we live by principles instead of traditions, by obedience to the law of the mind instead of by passion, the Great Mind will enter into us, not as now in fragments and detached thoughts, but the light of to-day will shine backward and forward.

Memory is a presumption of a possession of the future. Now we are halves, we see the past but not the future, but in that day will the hemisphere complete itself and foresight be as perfect as aftersight.

BOSTON.

"We are citizens of two fair cities," said the Genoese gentleman to a Florentine artist, "and if I were not a Genoese, I should wish to be Florentine." "And I," replied the artist, "if I were not Florentine" — "You would wish to be Genoese," said the other. "No," replied the artist, "I should wish to be Florentine."

THE rocky nook with hill-tops three
  Looked eastward from the farms,
And twice each day the flowing sea
  Took Boston in its arms.

. . . . . .

The sea returning day by day
  Restores the world-wide mart;
So let each dweller on the Bay
  Fold Boston in his heart.

Let the blood of her hundred thousands
  Throb in each manly vein,
And the wits of all her wisest
  Make sunshine in her brain.

And each shall care for other,
  And each to each shall bend,
To the poor a noble brother,
  To the good an equal friend.

A blessing through the ages thus
  Shield all thy roofs and towers!
GOD WITH THE FATHERS, SO WITH US,
  Thou darling town of ours!

BOSTON.

THE old physiologists said, "There is in the air a hidden food of life;" and they watched the effect of different climates. They believed the air of mountains and the seashore a potent predisposer to rebellion. The air was a good republican, and it was remarked that insulary people are versatile and addicted to change, both in religious and secular affairs.

The air that we breathe is an exhalation of all the solid material globe. An aerial fluid streams all day, all night, from every flower and leaf, from every water and soil, from every rock-ledge; and from every stratum a different aroma and air according to its quality. According to quality and according to temperature, it must have effect on manners.

There is the climate of the Sahara: a climate where the sunbeams are vertical; where is day after day, sunstroke after sunstroke, with a frosty shadow between. "There are countries," said Howell, "where the heaven is a fiery furnace, or a blowing bellows, or a dropping sponge, most parts of the year." Such is the assimilating force of the Indian climate, that, Sir Erskine Perry says, "the usage and opinion of the Hindoos so invades men of all castes and colors who

deal with them that all take a Hindoo tint. Parsee, Mongol, Afghan, Israelite, Christian, have all passed under this influence and exchanged a good part of their patrimony of ideas for the notions, manner of seeing, and habitual tone of Indian society." He compares it to the geologic phenomenon which the black soil of the Dhakkan offers, — the property, namely, of assimilating to itself every foreign substance introduced into its bosom.

How can we not believe in influences of climate and air, when, as true philosophers, we must believe that chemical atoms also have their spiritual cause why they are thus and not other ; that carbon, oxygen, alum and iron, each has its origin in spiritual nature ?

Even at this day men are to be found superstitious enough to believe that to certain spots on the surface of the planet special powers attach, and an exalted influence on the genius of man. And it appears as if some localities of the earth, through wholesome springs, or as the *habitat* of rare plants and minerals, or through ravishing beauties of Nature, were preferred before others. There is great testimony of discriminating persons to the effect that Rome is endowed with the enchanting property of inspiring a longing in men there to live and there to die.

Who lives one year in Boston ranges through all the climates of the globe. And if the character of the people has a larger range and greater versatility, causing them to exhibit equal dexterity in what are elsewhere reckoned incompatible works, perhaps they may thank their climate of extremes, which at one season gives them the splendor of the equator and a touch of

Syria, and then runs down to a cold which approaches the temperature of the celestial spaces.

It is not a country of luxury or of pictures ; of snows rather, of east-winds and changing skies ; visited by icebergs, which, floating by, nip with their cool breath our blossoms. Not a luxurious climate, but wisdom is not found with those who dwell at their ease. Give me a climate where people think well and construct well, — I will spend six months there, and you may have all the rest of my years.

What Vasari says, three hundred years ago, of the republican city of Florence might be said of Boston ; "that the desire for glory and honor is powerfully generated by the air of that place, in the men of every profession ; whereby all who possess talent are impelled to struggle that they may not remain in the same grade with those whom they perceive to be only men like themselves, even though they may acknowledge such indeed to be masters ; but all labor by every means to be foremost."

We find no less stimulus in our native air ; not less ambition in our blood, which Puritanism has not sufficiently chastised ; and at least an equal freedom in our laws and customs, with as many and as tempting rewards to toil ; with so many philanthropies, humanities, charities, soliciting us to be great and good.

New England is a sort of Scotland. 'T is hard to say why. Climate is much ; then, old accumulation of the means, — books, schools, colleges, literary society ; — as New Bedford is not nearer to the whales than New London or Portland, yet they have all the equipments for a whaler ready, and they hug an oil-cask like a brother.

I do not know that Charles River or Merrimac water is more clarifying to the brain than the Savannah or Alabama rivers, yet the men that drink it get up earlier, and some of the morning light lasts through the day. I notice that they who drink for some little time of the Potomac water lose their relish for the water of the Charles River, of the Merrimac and the Connecticut, — even of the Hudson. I think the Potomac water is a little acrid, and should be corrected by copious infusions of these provincial streams.

Of great cities you cannot compute the influences. In New York, in Montreal, New Orleans and the farthest colonies, — in Guiana, in Guadaloupe, — a middle-aged gentleman is just embarking with all his property to fulfil the dream of his life and spend his old age in Paris ; so that a fortune falls into the massive wealth of that city every day in the year. Astronomers come because there they can find apparatus and companions. Chemist, geologist, artist, musician, dancer, because there only are grandees and their patronage, appreciators and patrons. Demand and supply run into every invisible and unnamed province of whim and passion.

Each great city gathers these values and delights for mankind, and comes to be the brag of its age and population. The Greeks thought him unhappy who died without seeing the statue of Jove at Olympia. With still more reason, they praised Athens, the "Violet City." It was said of Rome in its proudest days, looking at the vast radiation of the privilege of Roman citizenship through the then-known world, — "the extent of the city and of the world is the same" (*spatium et urbis et orbis idem*). London now for a thousand years has been in an affirmative or energizing mood ;

has not stopped growing. Linnæus, like a naturalist, esteeming the globe a big egg, called London the *punctum saliens* in the yolk of the world.

This town of Boston has a history. It is not an accident, not a windmill, or a railroad station, or cross-roads tavern, or an army-barracks grown up by time and luck to a place of wealth ; but a seat of humanity, of men of principle, obeying a sentiment and marching loyally whither that should lead them ; so that its annals are great historical lines, inextricably national ; part of the history of political liberty. I do not speak with any fondness, but the language of coldest history, when I say that Boston commands attention as the town which was appointed in the destiny of nations to lead the civilization of North America.

A capital fact distinguishing this colony from all other colonies was that the persons composing it consented to come on the one condition that the charter should be transferred from the company in England to themselves ; and so they brought the government with them.

On the 3d of November, 1620, King James incorporated forty of his subjects, Sir F. Gorges and others, the council established at Plymouth in the county of Devon for the planting, ruling, ordering and governing of New England in America. The territory — conferred on the patentees in absolute property, with unlimited jurisdiction, the sole power of legislation, the appointment of all officers and all forms of government — extended from the 40th to the 48th degree of north latitude, and in length from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

John Smith writes (1624): "Of all the four parts of the world that I have yet seen not inhabited, could I but have means to transplant a colony, I would rather live here than anywhere ; and if it did not maintain itself, were we but once indifferently well fitted, let us starve. Here are many isles planted with corn, groves, mulberries, salvage gardens and good harbours. The sea-coast as you pass shows you all along large corn-fields and great troops of well-proportioned people." Massachusetts in particular, he calls "the paradise of these parts," notices its high mountain, and its river, "which doth pierce many days' journey into the entrails of that country." Morton arrived in 1622, in June, beheld the country, and "the more he looked, the more he liked it."

In sixty-eight years after the foundation of Boston, Dr. Mather writes of it, "The town hath indeed three elder Sisters in this colony, but it hath wonderfully outgrown them all, and her mother, Old Boston in England, also ; yea, within a few years after the first settlement it grew to be the metropolis of the whole English America."

How easy it is, after the city is built, to see where it ought to stand. In our beautiful bay, with its broad and deep waters covered with sails from every port ; with its islands hospitably shining in the sun ; with its waters bounded and marked by light-houses, buoys and sea-marks ; every foot sounded and charted ; with its shores trending steadily from the two arms which the capes of Massachusetts stretch out to sea, down to the bottom of the bay where the city domes and spires sparkle through the haze, — a good boatman can easily find his way for the first time to the State House, and

wonder that Governor Carver had not better eyes than to stop on the Plymouth Sands.

But it took ten years to find this out. The colony of 1620 had landed at Plymouth. It was December, and the ground was covered with snow. Snow and moonlight make all places alike ; and the weariness of the sea, the shrinking from cold weather and the pangs of hunger must justify them.

But the next colony planted itself at Salem, and the next at Weymouth ; another at Medford ; before these men, instead of jumping on to the first land that offered, wisely judged that the best point for a city was at the bottom of a deep and islanded bay, where a copious river entered it, and where a bold shore was bounded by a country of rich undulating woodland.

The planters of Massachusetts do not appear to have been hardy men, rather, comfortable citizens, not at all accustomed to the rough task of discoverers ; and they exaggerated their troubles. Bears and wolves were many ; but early, they believed there were lions ; Monadnoc was burned over to kill them. John Smith was stung near to death by the most poisonous tail of a fish, called a sting-ray. In the journey of Rev. Peter Bulkeley and his company through the forest from Boston to Concord they fainted from the powerful odor of the sweetfern in the sun ; — like what befell, still earlier, Biorn and Thorfinn, Northmen, in their expedition to the same coast ; who ate so many grapes from the wild vines that they were reeling drunk. The lions have never appeared since, — nor before. Their crops suffered from pigeons and mice. Nature has never again indulged in these exasperations. It seems to have

been the last outrage ever committed by the sting-rays or by the sweetfern, or by the fox-grapes ; they have been of peaceable behavior ever since.

Any geologist or engineer is accustomed to face more serious dangers than any enumerated, excepting the hostile Indians. But the awe was real and overpowering in the superstition with which every new object was magnified. The superstition which hung over the new ocean had not yet been scattered ; the powers of the savage were not known ; the dangers of the wilderness were unexplored ; and, in that time, terrors of witchcraft, terrors of evil spirits, and a certain degree of terror still clouded the idea of God in the mind of the purest.

The divine will descends into the barbarous mind in some strange disguise ; its pure truth not to be guessed from the rude vizard under which it goes masquerading. The common eye cannot tell what the bird will be, from the egg, nor the pure truth from the grotesque tenet which sheathes it. But by some secret tie it holds the poor savage to it, and he goes muttering his rude ritual or mythology, which yet conceals some grand commandment ; as courage, veracity, honesty, or chastity and generosity.

So these English men, with the Middle Ages still obscuring their reason, were filled with Christian thought. They had a culture of their own. They read Milton, Thomas à Kempis, Bunyan and Flavel with religious awe and delight, not for entertainment. They were precisely the idealists of England ; the most religious in a religious era. An old lady who remembered these pious people said of them that "they had to hold on hard to the huckleberry bushes to hinder themselves from being translated."

In our own age we are learning to look as on chivalry at the sweetness of that ancient piety which makes the genius of St. Bernard, Latimer, Scougal, Jeremy Taylor, Herbert, and Leighton. Who can read the fiery ejaculations of St. Augustine, a man of as clear a sight as almost any other ; of Thomas à Kempis, of Milton, of Bunyan even, without feeling how rich and expansive a culture — not so much a culture as a higher life — they owed to the promptings of this sentiment ; without contrasting their immortal heat with the cold complexion of our recent wits ? Who can read the pious diaries of the Englishmen in the time of the Commonwealth and later, without a sigh that we write no diaries to-day ? Who shall restore to us the odoriferous Sabbaths which made the earth and the humble roof a sanctity ?

This spirit, of course, involved that of Stoicism, as, in its turn, Stoicism did this. Yet how much more attractive and true that this piety should be the central trait and the stern virtues follow, than that Stoicism should face the gods and put Jove on his defence. That piety is a refutation of every skeptical doubt. These men are a bridge to us between the unparalleled piety of the Hebrew epoch and our own. These ancient men, like great gardens with great banks of flowers, send out their perfumed breath across the great tracts of time. How needful is David, Paul, Leighton, Fénelon, to our devotion. Of these writers, of this spirit which deified them, I will say with Confucius, " If in the morning I hear of the right way, and in the evening die, I can be happy."

I trace to this deep religious sentiment and to its culture great and salutary results to the people of New

England ; first, namely, the culture of the intellect, which has always been found in the Calvinistic church. The colony was planted in 1620 ; in 1638 Harvard College was founded. The General Court of Massachusetts, in 1647, " To the end that learning may not be buried in the graves of the forefathers, ordered, that every township, after the Lord has increased them to the number of fifty householders, shall appoint one to teach all children to write and read ; and where any town shall increase to the number of a hundred families, they shall set up a Grammar School, the Masters thereof being able to instruct youth so far as they may be fitted for the University."

Many and rich are the fruits of that simple statute. The universality of an elementary education in New England is her praise and her power in the whole world. To the schools succeeds the village Lyceum, — now very general throughout all the country towns of New England, — where every week through the winter, lectures are read and debates sustained which prove a college for the young rustic. Hence it happens that the young farmers and mechanics, who work all summer in the field or shop, in the winter often go into a neighboring town to teach the district school arithmetic and grammar. As you know too, New England supplies annually a large detachment of preachers and schoolmasters and private tutors to the interior of the South and West.

New England lies in the cold and hostile latitude which by shutting men up in houses and tight and heated rooms a large part of the year, and then again shutting up the body in flannel and leather, defrauds

the human being in some degree of his relations to external nature ; takes from the muscles their suppleness, from the skin its exposure to the air ; and the New Englander, like every other northerner, lacks that beauty and grace which the habit of living much in the air, and the activity of the limbs not in labor but in graceful exercise, tend to produce in climates nearer to the sun. Then the necessity, which always presses the northerner, of providing fuel and many clothes and tight houses and much food against the long winter, makes him anxiously frugal, and generates in him that spirit of detail which is not grand and enlarging, but goes rather to pinch the features and degrade the character.

As an antidote to the spirit of commerce and of economy, the religious spirit — always enlarging, firing man, prompting the pursuit of the vast, the beautiful, the unattainable — was especially necessary to the culture of New England. In the midst of her laborious and economical and rude and awkward population, where is little elegance and no facility ; with great accuracy in details, little spirit of society or knowledge of the world, you shall not unfrequently meet that refinement which no education and no habit of society can bestow ; which makes the elegance of wealth look stupid, and unites itself by natural affinity to the highest minds of the world ; nourishes itself on Plato and Dante, Michael Angelo and Milton ; on whatever is pure and sublime in art, — and, I may say, gave a hospitality in this country to the spirit of Coleridge and Wordsworth, and to the music of Beethoven, before yet their genius had found a hearty welcome in Great Britain.

I do not look to find in England better manners than the best manners here. We can show native examples, and I may almost say (travellers as we are) natives who never crossed the sea, who possess all the elements of noble behavior.

It is the property of the religious sentiment to be the most refining of all influences. No external advantages, no good birth or breeding, no culture of the taste, no habit of command, no association with the elegant, — even no depth of affection that does not rise to a religious sentiment, can bestow that delicacy and grandeur of bearing which belong only to a mind accustomed to celestial conversation. All else is coarse and external ; all else is tailoring and cosmetics beside this ;[1] for thoughts are expressed in every look or gesture, and these thoughts are as if angels had talked with the child.

By this instinct we are lifted to higher ground. The religious sentiment gave the iron purpose and arm. That colonizing was a great and generous scheme, manly meant and manly done. When one thinks of the enterprises that are attempted in the heats of youth, the Zoars, New-Harmonies and Brook-Farms, Oakdales and Phalansteries, which have been so profoundly ventilated, but end in a protracted picnic which after a few weeks or months dismisses the partakers to their old homes, we see with new increased respect the solid, well-calculated scheme of these emigrants, sitting down hard and fast where they came, and building their empire by due degrees.

[1] "Come dal fuoco il caldo, esser diviso,
Non puo'l bel dall' eterno."

MICHEL ANGELO.

[As from fire heat cannot be separated, — neither can beauty from the eternal.]

John Smith says, "Thirty, forty, or fifty sail went yearly in America only to trade and fish, but nothing would be done for a plantation, till about some hundred of your Brownists of England, Amsterdam and Leyden went to New Plymouth ; whose humorous ignorances caused them for more than a year to endure a wonderful deal of misery, with an infinite patience."

What should hinder that this America, so long kept in reserve from the intellectual races until they should grow to it, glimpses being afforded which spoke to the imagination, yet the firm shore hid until science and art should be ripe to propose it as a fixed aim, and a man should be found who should sail steadily west sixty-eight days from the port of Palos to find it, — what should hinder that this New Atlantis should have its happy ports, its mountains of security, its gardens fit for human abode where all elements were right for the health, power and virtue of man ?

America is growing like a cloud, towns on towns, States on States ; and wealth (always interesting, since from wealth power cannot be divorced) is piled in every form invented for comfort or pride.

If John Bull interest you at home, come and see him under new conditions, come and see the Jonathanization of John.

There are always men ready for adventures, — more in an over-governed, over-peopled country, where all the professions are crowded and all character suppressed, than elsewhere. This thirst for adventure is the vent which Destiny offers ; a war, a crusade, a gold mine, a new country, speak to the imagination and offer swing and play to the confined powers.

The American idea, Emancipation, appears in our

freedom of intellection, in our reforms, and in our bad politics ; it has, of course, its sinister side, which is most felt by the drilled and scholastic, but if followed it leads to heavenly places.

European and American are each ridiculous out of his sphere. There is a Columbia of thought and art and character, which is the last and endless sequel of Columbus's adventure.

European critics regret the detachment of the Puritans to this country without aristocracy ; which a little reminds one of the pity of the Swiss mountaineers when shown a handsome Englishman : "What a pity he has no goitre ! " The future historian will regard the detachment of the Puritans without aristocracy the supreme fortune of the colony ; as great a gain to mankind as the opening of this continent.

There is a little formula, couched in pure Saxon, which you may hear in the corners of streets and in the yard of the dame's school, from very little republicans: "I 'm as good as you be," which contains the essence of the Massachusetts Bill of Rights and of the American Declaration of Independence. And this was at the bottom of Plymouth Rock and of Boston Stone ; and this could be heard (by an acute ear) in the Petitions to the King, and the platforms of churches, and was said and sung in every tone of the psalmody of the Puritans ; in every note of Old Hundred and Hallelujah and Short Particular Metre.

What is very conspicuous is the saucy independence which shines in all their eyes. They could say to themselves, Well, at least this yoke of man, of bishops, of courtiers, of dukes, is off my neck. We are a little too

close to wolf and famine than that anybody should give himself airs here in the swamp.

London is a long way off, with beadles and pursuivants and horse-guards. Here in the clam-banks and the beech and chestnut forest, I shall take leave to breathe and think freely. If you do not like it, if you molest me, I can cross the brook and plant a new state out of reach of anything but squirrels and wild pigeons.

Bonaparte sighed for his republicans of 1789. The soul of a political party is by no means usually the officers and pets of the party, who wear the honors and fill the high seats and spend the salaries. No, but the theorists and extremists, the men who are never contented and never to be contented with the work actually accomplished, but who from conscience are engaged to what that party professes, — these men will work and watch and rally and never tire in carrying their point. The theology and the instinct of freedom that grew here in the dark in serious men furnished a certain rancor which consumed all opposition, fed the party and carried it, over every rampart and obstacle, to victory.

Boston never wanted a good principle of rebellion in it, from the planting until now ; there is always a minority unconvinced, always a heresiarch, whom the governor and deputies labor with but cannot silence. Some new light, some new doctrinaire who makes an unnecessary ado to establish his dogma ; some Wheelwright or defender of Wheelwright ; some protester against the cruelty of the magistrates to the Quakers ; some tender minister hospitable to Whitefield against the counsel of all the ministers ; some John Adams and

Josiah Quincy and Governor Andrew to undertake and carry the defence of patriots in the courts against the uproar of all the province ; some defender of the slave against the politician and the merchant ; some champion of first principles of humanity against the rich and luxurious ; some adversary of the death penalty ; some pleader for peace ; some noble protestant, who will not stoop to infamy when all are gone mad, but will stand for liberty and justice, if alone, until all come back to him.

I confess I do not find in our people, with all their education, a fair share of originality of thought ; — not any remarkable book of wisdom ; not any broad generalization, any equal power of imagination. No Novum Organon ; no Mécanique Céleste ; no Principia ; no Paradise Lost ; no Hamlet ; no Wealth of Nations ; no National Anthem ; have we yet contributed.

Nature is a frugal mother and never gives without measure. When she has work to do she qualifies men for that and sends them equipped for that. In Massachusetts she did not want epic poems and dramas yet, but first, planters of towns, fellers of the forest, builders of mills and forges, builders of roads, and farmers to till and harvest corn for the world. Corn, yes, but honest corn ; corn with thanks to the Giver of corn ; and the best thanks, namely, obedience to his law ; this was the office imposed on our Founders and people ; liberty, clean and wise. It was to be built on Religion, the Emancipator ; Religion which teaches equality of all men in view of the spirit which created man.

The seed of prosperity was planted. The people did not gather where they had not sown. They did not

try to unlock the treasure of the world except by honest keys of labor and skill. They knew, as God knew, that command of nature comes by obedience to nature ; that reward comes by faithful service ; that the most noble motto was that of the Prince of Wales, — "I serve," — and that he is greatest who serves best. There was no secret of labor which they disdained.

They accepted the divine ordination that man is for use ; that intelligent being exists to the utmost use ; and that his ruin is to live for pleasure and for show. And when within our memory some flippant senator wished to taunt the people of this country by calling them "the mudsills of society," he paid them ignorantly a true praise ; for good men are as the green plain of the earth is, as the rocks, and the beds of rivers are, the foundation and flooring and sills of the State.

The power of labor which belongs to the English race fell here into a climate which befriended it, and into a maritime country made for trade, where was no rival and no envious lawgiver. The sailor and the merchant made the law to suit themselves, so that there was never, I suppose, a more rapid expansion in population, wealth and all the elements of power, and in the citizens, consciousness of power and sustained assertion of it, than was exhibited here.

Moral values become also money values. When men saw that these people, besides their industry and thrift, had a heart and soul and would stand by each other at all hazards, they desired to come and live here. A house in Boston was worth as much again as a house just as good in a town of timorous people, because here the neighbors would defend each other against bad gov-

ernors and against troops ; quite naturally house-rents rose in Boston.

Besides, youth and health like a stirring town, above a torpid place where nothing is doing. In Boston they were sure to see something going forward before the year was out. For here was the moving principle itself, the *primum mobile*, a living mind agitating the mass and always afflicting the conservative class with some odious novelty or other ; a new religious sect, a political point, a point of honor, a reform in education, a philanthropy.

From Roger Williams and Eliot and Robinson and the Quaker women who for a testimony walked naked into the streets, and as the record tells us "were arrested and publicly whipped, — the baggages that they were ;" from Wheelwright the Antinomian and Ann Hutchinson and Whitefield and Mother Ann the first Shaker, down to Abner Kneeland and Father Lamson and William Garrison, there never was wanting some thorn of dissent and innovation and heresy to prick the sides of conservatism.

With all their love of his person, they took immense pleasure in turning out the governor and deputy and assistants, and contravening the counsel of the clergy ; as they had come so far for the sweet satisfaction of resisting the Bishops and the King.

The Massachusetts colony grew and filled its own borders with a denser population than any other American State (Kossuth called it the City State), all the while sending out colonies to every part of New England ; then South and West, until it has infused all the Union with its blood.

We are willing to see our sons emigrate, as to see our hives swarm. That is what they were made to do, and what the land wants and invites. The towns or countries in which the man lives and dies where he was born, and his son and son's son live and die where he did, are of no great account.

I know that this history contains many black lines of cruel injustice ; murder, persecution, and execution of women for witchcraft.

I am afraid there are anecdotes of poverty and disease in Broad Street that match the dismal statistics of New York and London. No doubt all manner of vices can be found in this, as in every city ; infinite meanness, scarlet crime. Granted. But there is yet in every city a certain permanent tone ; a tendency to be in the right or in the wrong ; audacity or slowness ; labor or luxury ; giving or parsimony ; which side is it on ? And I hold that a community, as a man, is entitled to be judged by his best.

We are often praised for what is least ours. Boston too is sometimes pushed into a theatrical attitude of virtue, to which she is not entitled and which she cannot keep. But the genius of Boston is seen in her real independence, productive power and northern acuteness of mind, — which is in nature hostile to oppression. It is a good city as cities go ; Nature is good. The climate is electric, good for wit and good for character. What public souls have lived here, what social benefactors, what eloquent preachers, skilful workmen, stout captains, wise merchants ; what fine artists, what gifted conversers, what mathematicians, what lawyers, what wits ; and where is the middle class so able, virtuous and instructed ?

And thus our little city thrives and enlarges, striking deep roots, and sending out boughs and buds, and propagating itself like a banyan over the continent. Greater cities there are that sprung from it, full of its blood and names and traditions. It is very willing to be outnumbered and outgrown, so long as they carry forward its life of civil and religious freedom, of education, of social order, and of loyalty to law. It is very willing to be outrun in numbers, and in wealth ; but it is very jealous of any superiority in these, its natural instinct and privilege. You cannot conquer it by numbers, or by square miles, or by counted millions of wealth. For it owes its existence and its power to principles not of yesterday, and the deeper principle will always prevail over whatever material accumulations.

As long as she cleaves to her liberty, her education and to her spiritual faith as the foundation of these, she will teach the teachers and rule the rulers of America. Her mechanics, her farmers will toil better ; she will repair mischief ; she will furnish what is wanted in the hour of need ; her sailors will man the Constitution ; her mechanics repair the broken rail ; her troops will be the first in the field to vindicate the majesty of a free nation, and remain last on the field to secure it. Her genius will write the laws and her historians record the fate of nations.

In an age of trade and material prosperity, we have stood a little stupefied by the elevation of our ancestors. We praised the Puritans because we did not find in ourselves the spirit to do the like. We praised with a certain adulation the invariable valor of the old war-

gods and war-councillors of the Revolution. Washington has seemed an exceptional virtue. This praise was a concession of unworthiness in those who had so much to say of it. The heroes only shared this power of a sentiment, which, if it now breathes into us, will make it easy to us to understand them, and we shall not longer flatter them. Let us shame the fathers, by superior virtue in the sons.

It is almost a proverb that a great man has not a great son. Bacon, Newton and Washington were childless. But, in Boston, Nature is more indulgent, and has given good sons to good sires, or at least continued merit in the same blood. The elder President Adams has to divide voices of fame with the younger President Adams. The elder Otis could hardly excel the popular eloquence of the younger Otis ; and the Quincy of the Revolution seems compensated for the shortness of his bright career in the son who so long lingers among the last of those bright clouds,

> "That on the steady breeze of honor sail
> In long succession calm and beautiful."

Here stands to-day as of yore our little city of the rocks ; here let it stand forever, on the man-bearing granite of the North ! Let her stand fast by herself ! She has grown great. She is filled with strangers, but she can only prosper by adhering to her faith. Let every child that is born of her and every child of her adoption see to it to keep the name of Boston as clean as the sun ; and in distant ages her motto shall be the prayer of millions on all the hills that gird the town, "As with our Fathers, so God be with us!" SICUT PATRIBUS, SIT DEUS NOBIS !

MICHAEL ANGELO.

NEVER did sculptor's dream unfold
A form which marble doth not hold
In its white block; yet it therein shall find
Only the hand secure and bold
Which still obeys the mind.

MICHAEL ANGELO'S *Sonnets.*

Non ha l' ottimo artista alcun concetto,
Ch'un marmo solo in sè non circoscriva
Col suo soverchio, e solo a quello arriva
La man che obbedisce all' intelletto.

M. Angelo, *Sonnetto primo.*

MICHAEL ANGELO.[1]

FEW lives of eminent men are harmonious ; few that furnish, in all the facts, an image corresponding with their fame. But all things recorded of Michael Angelo Buonarotti agree together. He lived one life ; he pursued one career. He accomplished extraordinary works ; he uttered extraordinary words ; and in this greatness was so little eccentricity, so true was he to the laws of the human mind, that his character and his works, like Sir Isaac Newton's, seem rather a part of nature than arbitrary productions of the human will. Especially we venerate his moral fame. Whilst his name belongs to the highest class of genius, his life contains in it no injurious influence. Every line in his biography might be read to the human race with wholesome effect. The means, the materials of his activity, were coarse enough to be appreciated, being addressed for the most part to the eye ; the results, sublime and all innocent. A purity severe and even terrible goes out from the lofty productions of his pencil and his chisel, and again from the more perfect sculpture of his own life, which heals and exalts. "He nothing

[1] Reprinted from the *North American Review*, June, 1837.

common did, or mean," and dying at the end of near ninety years, had not yet become old, but was engaged in executing his grand conceptions in the ineffaceable architecture of St. Peter's.

Above all men whose history we know, Michael Angelo presents us with the perfect image of the artist. He is an eminent master in the four fine arts, Painting, Sculpture, Architecture and Poetry. In three of them by visible means, and in poetry by words, he strove to express the Idea of Beauty. This idea possessed him and determined all his activity. Beauty in the largest sense, beauty inward and outward, comprehending grandeur as a part, and reaching to goodness as its soul, — this to receive and this to impart, was his genius.

It is a happiness to find, amid the falsehood and griefs of the human race, a soul at intervals born to behold and create only beauty. So shall not the indescribable charm of the natural world, the great spectacle of morn and evening which shut and open the most disastrous day, want observers. The ancient Greeks called the world *χόσμος, Beauty ;* a name which, in our artificial state of society, sounds fanciful and impertinent. Yet, in proportion as man rises above the servitude to wealth and a pursuit of mean pleasures, he perceives that what is most real is most beautiful, and that, by the contemplation of such objects, he is taught and exalted. This truth, that perfect beauty and perfect goodness are one, was made known to Michael Angelo ; and we shall endeavor by sketches from his life to show the direction and limitations of his search after this element.

In considering a life dedicated to the study of Beauty,

it is natural to inquire, what is Beauty? Can this charming element be so abstracted by the human mind, as to become a distinct and permanent object? Beauty cannot be defined. Like Truth, it is an ultimate aim of the human being. It does not lie within the limits of the understanding. "The nature of the beautiful," — we gladly borrow the language of Moritz, a German critic, — "consists herein, that because the understanding in the presence of the beautiful cannot ask, 'Why is it beautiful?' for that reason is it so. There is no standard whereby the understanding can determine whether objects are beautiful or otherwise. What other standard of the beautiful exists, than the entire circuit of all harmonious proportions of the great system of nature? All particular beauties scattered up and down in nature are only so far beautiful, as they suggest more or less in themselves this entire circuit of harmonious proportions." This great Whole, the understanding cannot embrace. Beauty may be felt. It may be produced. But it cannot be defined.

The Italian artists sanction this view of beauty by describing it as *il più nell' uno*, "the many in one," or multitude in unity, intimating that what is truly beautiful seems related to all nature. A beautiful person has a kind of universality, and appears to have truer conformity to all pleasing objects in external nature than another. Every great work of art seems to take up into itself the excellencies of all works, and to present, as it were, a miniature of nature.

In relation to this element of Beauty, the minds of men divide themselves into two classes. In the first place, all men have an organization corresponding more or less to the entire system of nature, and therefore

a power of deriving pleasure from Beauty. This is Taste. In the second place, certain minds, more closely harmonized with nature, possess the power of abstracting Beauty from things, and reproducing it in new forms, on any object to which accident may determine their activity; as stone, canvas, song, history. This is Art.

Since Beauty is thus an abstraction of the harmony and proportion that reigns in all nature, it is therefore studied in nature, and not in what does not exist. Hence the celebrated French maxim of Rhetoric, *Rien de beau que le vrai;* "Nothing is beautiful but what is true." It has a much wider application than to Rhetoric; as wide, namely, as the terms of the proposition admit. In art, Michael Angelo is himself but a document or verification of this maxim. He labored to express the beautiful, in the entire conviction that it was only to be attained unto by knowledge of the true. The common eye is satisfied with the surface on which it rests. The wise eye knows that it is surface, and, if beautiful, only the result of interior harmonies, which, to him who knows them, compose the image of higher beauty. Moreover, he knew well that only by an understanding of the internal mechanism can the outside be faithfully delineated. The walls of houses are transparent to the architect. The symptoms disclose the constitution to the physician; and to the artist it belongs by a better knowledge of anatomy, and, within anatomy, of life and thought, to acquire the power of true drawing. "The human form," says Goethe, "cannot be comprehended through seeing its surface. It must be stripped of the muscles, its parts separated, its joints observed, its divisions marked, its action and

counter action learned; the hidden, the reposing, the foundation of the apparent, must be searched, if one would really see and imitate what moves as a beautiful inseparable whole in living waves before the eye." Michael Angelo dedicated himself, from his childhood to his death, to a toilsome observation of nature. The first anecdote recorded of him shows him to be already on the right road. Granacci, a painter's apprentice, having lent him, when a boy, a print of St. Antony beaten by devils, together with some colors and pencils, he went to the fish-market to observe the form and color of fins and of the eyes of fish. Cardinal Farnese one day found him, when an old man, walking alone in the Coliseum, and expressed his surprise at finding him solitary amidst the ruins; to which he replied, "I go yet to school that I may continue to learn." And one of the last drawings in his portfolio is a sublime hint of his own feeling; for it is a sketch of an old man with a long beard, in a go-cart, with an hour-glass before him; and the motto, *Ancora imparo*, "I still learn."

In this spirit he devoted himself to the study of anatomy for twelve years; we ought to say rather, as long as he lived. The depth of his knowledge in anatomy has no parallel among the artists of modern times. Most of his designs, his contemporaries inform us, were made with a pen, and in the style of an engraving on copper or wood; a manner more expressive but not admitting of correction. When Michael Angelo would begin a statue, he made first on paper the *skeleton;* afterwards, upon another paper, the same figure clothed with muscles. The studies of the statue of Christ in the Church of Minerva at Rome, made in this manner, were long preserved.

Those who have never given attention to the arts of design, are surprised that the artist should find so much to study in a fabric of such limited parts and dimensions as the human body. But reflection discloses evermore a closer analogy between the finite form and the infinite inhabitant. Man is the highest, and indeed the only proper object of plastic art. There needs no better proof of our instinctive feeling of the immense expression of which the human figure is capable, than the uniform tendency which the religion of every country has betrayed towards Anthropomorphism, or attributing to the Deity the human form. And behold the effect of this familiar object every day! No acquaintance with the secrets of its mechanism, no degrading views of human nature, not the most swinish compost of mud and blood that was ever misnamed philosophy, can avail to hinder us from doing involuntary reverence to any exhibition of majesty or surpassing beauty in human clay.

Our knowledge of its highest expression we owe to the Fine Arts. Not easily in this age will any man acquire by himself such perceptions of the dignity or grace of the human frame, as the student of art owes to the remains of Phidias, to the Apollo, the Jove, the paintings and statues of Michael Angelo, and the works of Canova. There are now in Italy, both on canvas and in marble, forms and faces which the imagination is enriched by contemplating. Goethe says that he is but half himself who has never seen the Juno in the Rondanini palace at Rome. Seeing these works true to human nature and yet superhuman, "we feel that we are greater than we know." Seeing these works, we appreciate the taste which led Michael Angelo, against

the taste and against the admonition of his patrons, to cover the walls of churches with unclothed figures, "improper," says his biographer, "for the place, but proper for the exhibition of all the pomp of his profound knowledge."

The love of beauty which never passes beyond outline and color, was too slight an object to occupy the powers of his genius. There is a closer relation than is commonly thought between the fine arts and the useful arts ; and it is an essential fact in the history of Michael Angelo, that his love of beauty is made solid and perfect by his deep understanding of the mechanic arts. Architecture is the bond that unites the elegant and the economical arts, and his skill in this is a pledge of his capacity in both kinds. His Titanic handwriting in marble and travertine is to be found in every part of Rome and Florence ; and even at Venice, on defective evidence, he is said to have given the plan of the bridge of the Rialto. Nor was his a skill in ornament, or confined to the outline and designs of towers and façades, but a thorough acquaintance with all the secrets of the art, with all the details of economy and strength.

When the Florentines united themselves with Venice, England and France, to oppose the power of the Emperor Charles V., Michael Angelo was appointed Military Architect and Engineer, to superintend the erection of the necessary works. He visited Bologna to inspect its celebrated fortifications, and, on his return, constructed a fortification on the heights of San Miniato, which commands the city and environs of Florence. On the 24th of October, 1529, the Prince of Orange, general of Charles V., encamped on the hills surrounding the city, and his first operation was to throw up a

rampart to storm the bastion of San Miniato. His design was frustrated by the providence of Michael Angelo. Michael made such good resistance, that the Prince directed the artillery to demolish the tower. The artist hung mattresses of wool on the side exposed to the attack, and by means of a bold projecting cornice, from which they were suspended, a considerable space was left between them and the wall. This simple expedient was sufficient, and the Prince was obliged to turn his siege into a blockade.

After an active and successful service to the city for six months, Michael Angelo was informed of a treachery that was ripening within the walls. He communicated it to the government with his advice upon it ; but was mortified by receiving from the government reproaches at his credulity and fear. He replied, "that it was useless for him to take care of the walls, if they were determined not to take care of themselves," and he withdrew privately from the city to Ferrara, and thence to Venice. The news of his departure occasioned a general concern in Florence, and he was instantly followed with apologies and importunities to return. He did so, and resumed his office. On the 21st of March, 1530, the Prince of Orange assaulted the city by storm. Michael Angelo is represented as having ordered his defence so vigorously, that the Prince was compelled to retire. By the treachery however of the general of the Republic, Malatesta Baglioni, all his skill was rendered unavailing, and the city capitulated on the 9th of August. The excellence of the works constructed by our artist has been approved by Vauban, who visited them and took a plan of them.

In Rome, Michael Angelo was consulted by Pope

Paul III. in building the fortifications of San Borgo. He built the stairs of Ara Celi leading to the Church once the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus ; he arranged the piazza of the Capitol, and built its porticoes. He was charged with rebuilding the Pons Palatinus over the Tiber. He prepared, accordingly, a large quantity of blocks of travertine, and was proceeding with the work, when, through the intervention of his rivals, this work was taken from him and intrusted to Nanni di Bacio Bigio, who plays but a pitiful part in Michael's history. Nanni sold the travertine, and filled up the piers with gravel at a small expense. Michael Angelo made known his opinion, that the bridge could not resist the force of the current ; and, one day riding over it on horseback, with his friend Vasari, he cried, "George, this bridge trembles under us ; let us ride faster lest it fall whilst we are upon it." It fell, five years after it was built, in 1557, and is still called the "Broken Bridge."

Versatility of talent in men of undoubted ability always awakens the liveliest interest ; and we observe with delight, that, besides the sublimity and even extravagance of Michael Angelo, he possessed an unexpected dexterity in minute mechanical contrivances. When the Sistine Chapel was prepared for him that he might paint the ceiling, he found the platform on which he was to work, suspended by ropes which passed through the ceiling. Michael demanded of San Gallo, the Pope's architect, how these holes were to be repaired in the picture ? San Gallo replied ; "That was for him to consider, for the platform could be constructed in no other way." Michael removed the whole, and constructed a movable platform to rest and

roll upon the floor, which is believed to be the same simple contrivance which is used in Rome, at this day, to repair the walls of churches. He gave this model to a carpenter, who made it so profitable as to furnish a dowry for his two daughters. He was so nice in tools, that he made with his own hand the wimbles, the files, the rasps, the chisels and all other irons and instruments which he needed in sculpture ; and, in painting, he not only mixed but ground his colors himself, trusting no one.

And not only was this discoverer of Beauty, and its teacher among men, rooted and grounded in those severe laws of practical skill, which genius can never teach, and which must be learned by practice alone, but he was one of the most industrious men that ever lived. His diligence was so great that it is wonderful how he endured its fatigues. The midnight battles, the forced marches, the winter campaigns of Julius Cæsar or Charles XII. do not indicate greater strength of body or of mind. He finished the gigantic painting of the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in twenty months, a fact which enlarges, it has been said, the known powers of man. Indeed he toiled so assiduously at this painful work, that, for a long time after, he was unable to see any picture but by holding it over his head. A little bread and wine was all his nourishment ; and he told Vasari that he often slept in his clothes, both because he was too weary to undress, and because he would rise in the night and go immediately to work. "I have found," says his friend, "some of his designs in Florence, where, whilst may be seen the greatness of his genius, it may also be known that when he wished to take Minerva from the head of Jove, there needed the

hammer of Vulcan." He used to make to a single figure nine, ten, or twelve heads before he could satisfy himself, seeking that there should be in the composition a certain universal grace such as nature makes, saying, that "he needed to have his compasses in his eye, and not in his hand, because the hands work whilst the eye judges." He was accustomed to say, "Those figures alone are good, from which the labor is scraped off, when the scaffolding is taken away."

At near eighty years, he began in marble a group of four figures for a dead Christ ; because, he said, to exercise himself with the mallet was good for his health.

And what did he accomplish ? It does not fall within our design to give an account of his works, yet for the sake of the completeness of our sketch we will name the principal ones. Sculpture he called *his* art, and to it he regretted afterwards he had not singly given himself. The style of his paintings is monumental ; and even his poetry partakes of that character. In sculpture, his greatest work is the statue of Moses in the Church of Pietro in Vincolo, in Rome. It is a sitting statue of colossal size, and is designed to embody the Hebrew Law. The lawgiver is supposed to gaze upon the worshippers of the golden calf. The majestic wrath of the figure daunts the beholder. In the Piazza del Gran Duca at Florence, stands, in the open air, his David, about to hurl the stone at Goliah. In the Church called the Minerva, at Rome, is his Christ ; an object of so much devotion to the people, that the right foot has been shod with a brazen sandal to prevent it from being kissed away. In St. Peter's, is his Pietà, or dead Christ in the arms of his mother. In the Mausoleum of the Medici at Florence, are the tombs of Lo-

renzo and Cosmo, with the grand statues of Night and Day, and Aurora and Twilight. Several statues of less fame, and bas-reliefs, are in Rome and Florence and Paris.

His Paintings are in the Sistine Chapel, of which he first covered the ceiling with the story of the creation, in successive compartments, with the great series of the Prophets and Sibyls in alternate tablets, and a series of greater and smaller fancy-pieces in the lunettes. This is his capital work painted in fresco. Every one of these pieces, every figure, every hand and foot and finger, is a study of anatomy and design. Slighting the secondary arts of coloring, and all the aids of graceful finish, he aimed exclusively, as a stern designer, to express the vigor and magnificence of his conceptions. Upon the wall, over the altar, is painted the Last Judgment.

Of his designs, the most celebrated is the cartoon representing soldiers coming out in the bath and arming themselves ; an incident of the war of Pisa. The wonderful merit of this drawing, which contrasts the extremes of relaxation and vigor, is conspicuous even in the coarsest prints.

Of his genius for Architecture, it is sufficient to say that he built St. Peter's, an ornament of the earth. He said he would hang the Pantheon in the air ; and he redeemed his pledge by suspending that vast cupola, without offence to grace or to stability, over the astonished beholder. He did not live to complete the work ; but is there not something affecting in the spectacle of an old man, on the verge of ninety years, carrying steadily onward with the heat and determination of manhood, his poetic conceptions into progressive exe-

cution, surmounting by the dignity of his purposes all obstacles and all enmities, and only hindered by the limits of life from fulfilling his designs? Very slowly came he, after months and years, to the dome. At last he began to model it very small in wax. When it was finished, he had it copied larger in wood, and by this model it was built. Long after it was completed, and often since, to this day, rumors are occasionally spread that it is giving way, and it is said to have been injured by unskilful attempts to repair it. Benedict XIV., during one of these panics, sent for the architect Marchese Polini, to come to Rome and examine it. Polini put an end to all the various projects of repairs, by the satisfying sentence; "The cupola does not start, and if it should start, nothing can be done but to pull it down."

The impulse of his grand style was instantaneous upon his contemporaries. Every stroke of his pencil moved the pencil in Raphael's hand. Raphael said, "I bless God I live in the times of Michael Angelo." Sir Joshua Reynolds, two centuries later, declared to the British Institution, "I feel a self-congratulation in knowing myself capable of such sensations as he intended to excite."

A man of such habits and such deeds, made good his pretensions to a perception and to delineation of external beauty. But inimitable as his works are, his whole life confessed that his hand was all inadequate to express his thought. "He alone," he said, "is an artist whose hands can perfectly execute what his mind has conceived;" and such was his own mastery, that men said, "the marble was flexible in his hands." Yet, contemplating ever with love the idea of absolute beauty,

he was still dissatisfied with his own work. The things proposed to him in his imagination were such, that, for not being able with his hands to express so grand and terrible conceptions, he often abandoned his work. For this reason he often only blocked his statue. A little before he died, he burned a great number of designs, sketches and cartoons made by him, being impatient of their defects. Grace in living forms, except in very rare instances, did not satisfy him. He never made but one portrait (a cartoon of Messer Tommaso di Cavalieri), because he abhorred to draw a likeness unless it were of infinite beauty.

Such was his devotion to art. But let no man suppose that the images which his spirit worshipped were mere transcripts of external grace, or that this profound soul was taken or holden in the chains of superficial beauty. To him, of all men, it was transparent. Through it he beheld the eternal spiritual beauty which ever clothes itself with grand and graceful outlines, as its appropriate form. He called eternal grace "the frail and weary weed, in which God dresses the soul which he has called into Time." "As from the fire, heat cannot be divided, no more can beauty from the eternal." He was conscious in his efforts of higher aims than to address the eye. He sought, through the eye, to reach the soul. Therefore, as, in the first place, he sought to approach the Beautiful by the study of the True, so he failed not to make the next step of progress, and to seek Beauty in its highest form, that of Goodness. The sublimity of his art is in his life. He did not only build a divine temple, and paint and carve saints and prophets. He lived out the same inspiration. There is no spot upon his fame. The fire and

sanctity of his pencil breathe in his words. When he was informed that Paul IV. desired he should paint again the side of the chapel where the Last Judgment was painted, because of the indecorous nudity of the figures, he replied, "Tell the Pope that this is easily done. Let him reform the world and he will find the pictures will reform themselves." He saw clearly that if the corrupt and vulgar eyes, that could see nothing but indecorum in his terrific prophets and angels, could be purified as his own were pure, they would only find occasion for devotion in the same figures. As he refused to undo his work, Daniel di Volterra was employed to clothe the figures; hence ludicrously called *Il Braghettone.* When the Pope suggested to him that the chapel would be enriched if the figures were ornamented with gold, Michael Angelo replied, "In those days, gold was not worn; and the characters I have painted were neither rich nor desirous of wealth, but holy men, with whom gold was an object of contempt."

Not until he was in the seventy-third year of his age, he undertook the building of St. Peter's. On the death of San Gallo, the architect of the church, Paul III. first entreated, then commanded the aged artist, to assume the charge of this great work, which though commenced forty years before, was only commenced by Bramante, and ill continued by San Gallo. Michael Angelo, who believed in his own ability as a sculptor, but distrusted his capacity as an architect, at first refused and then reluctantly complied. His heroic stipulation with the Pope was worthy of the man and the work. He required that he should be permitted to accept this work without any fee or reward, because he undertook it as a religious act;

and, furthermore, that he should be absolute master of the whole design, free to depart from the plans of San Gallo and to alter what had been already done.

This disinterestedness and spirit, — no fee and no interference, — reminds one of the reward named by the ancient Persian. When importuned to claim some compensation of the empire for the important services he had rendered it, he demanded, "that he and his should neither command nor obey, but should be free." However, as it was undertaken, so was it performed. When the Pope, delighted with one of his chapels, sent him one hundred crowns of gold, as one month's wages, Michael sent them back. The Pope was angry, but the artist was immovable. Amidst endless annoyances from the envy and interest of the office-holders and agents in the work whom he had displaced, he steadily ripened and executed his vast ideas. The combined desire to fulfil, in everlasting stone, the conceptions of his mind, and to complete his worthy offering to Almighty God, sustained him through numberless vexations with unbroken spirit. In answer to the importunate solicitations of the Duke of Tuscany that he would come to Florence, he replies that "to leave St. Peter's in the state in which it now was, would be to ruin the structure, and thereby be guilty of a great sin;" that he hoped he should shortly see the execution of his plans brought to such a point that they could no longer be interfered with, and this was the capital object of his wishes, "if," he adds, "I do not commit a great crime, by disappointing the cormorants who are daily hoping to get rid of me."

A natural fruit of the nobility of his spirit is his admiration of Dante, to whom two of his sonnets are

addressed. He shared Dante's "deep contempt of the vulgar, not of the simple inhabitants of lowly streets or humble cottages, but of that sordid and abject crowd of all classes and all places who obscure, as much as in them lies, every beam of beauty in the universe." In like manner, he possessed an intense love of solitude. He lived alone, and never or very rarely took his meals with any person. As will be supposed, he had a passion for the country, and in old age speaks with extreme pleasure of his residence with the hermits in the mountains of Spoleto; so much so that he says he is "only half in Rome, since, truly, peace is only to be found in the woods." Traits of an almost savage independence mark all his history. Although he was rich, he lived like a poor man, and never would receive a present from any person; because it seemed to him that if a man gave him anything, he was always obligated to that individual. His friend Vasari mentions one occasion on which his scruples were overcome. It seems that Michael was accustomed to work at night with a pasteboard cap or helmet on his head, into which he stuck a candle, that his work might be lighted and his hands at liberty. Vasari observed that he did not use wax candles, but a better sort made of the tallow of goats. He therefore sent him four bundles of them, containing forty pounds. His servant brought them after night-fall, and presented them to him. Michael Angelo refused to receive them. "Look you, Messer Michael Angelo," replied the man, "these candles have well nigh broken my arm, and I will not carry them back; but just here, before your door, is a spot of soft mud, and they will stand upright in it very well, and there I will light them all." — "Put them down, then,"

returned Michael, "since you shall not make a bonfire at my gate." Meantime he was liberal to profusion to his old domestic Urbino, to whom he gave at one time two thousand crowns, and made him rich in his service.

Michael Angelo was of that class of men who are too superior to the multitude around them to command a full and perfect sympathy. They stand in the attitude rather of appeal from their contemporaries to their race. It has been the defect of some great men, that they did not duly appreciate or did not confess the talents and virtues of others, and so lacked one of the richest sources of happiness and one of the best elements of humanity. This apathy perhaps happens as often from preoccupied attention as from jealousy. It has been supposed that artists more than others are liable to this defect. But Michael Angelo's praise on many works is to this day the stamp of fame. Michael Angelo said of Masaccio's pictures that when they were first painted they must have been alive. He said of his predecessor, the architect Bramante, that he laid the first stone of St. Peter's, clear, insulated, luminous, with fit design for a vast structure. He often expressed his admiration of Cellini's bust of Altoviti. He loved to express admiration of Titian, of Donatello, of Ghiberti, of Brunelleschi. And it is said that when he left Florence to go to Rome, to build St. Peter's, he turned his horse's head on the last hill from which the noble dome of the Cathedral (built by Brunelleschi) is visible, and said, "Like you, I will not build; better than you I cannot." Indeed, as we have said, the reputation of many works of art now in Italy derives a sanction from the tradition of his praise. It is more

commendation to say, "This was Michael Angelo's favorite," than to say, "This was carried to Paris by Napoleon." Michael, however, had the philosophy to say, "Only an inventor can use the inventions of others."

There is yet one more trait in Michael Angelo's history, which humanizes his character without lessening its loftiness; this is his platonic love. He was deeply enamored of the most accomplished lady of the time, Vittoria Colonna, the widow of the Marquis di Pescara, who, after the death of her husband, devoted herself to letters, and to the writing of religious poetry. She was also an admirer of his genius, and came to Rome repeatedly to see him. To her his sonnets are addressed; and they all breathe a chaste and divine regard, unparalleled in any amatory poetry except that of Dante and Petrarch. They are founded on the thought that beauty is the virtue of the body, as virtue is the beauty of the soul; that a beautiful person is sent into the world as an image of the divine beauty, not to provoke but to purify the sensual into an intellectual and divine love. He enthrones his mistress as a benignant angel, who is to refine and perfect his own character. Condivi, his friend, has left this testimony; "I have often heard Michael Angelo reason and discourse upon love, but never heard him speak otherwise than upon platonic love. As for me, I am ignorant what Plato has said upon this subject; but this I know very well, that, in a long intimacy, I never heard from his mouth a single word that was not perfectly decorous and having for its object to extinguish in youth every improper desire, and that his own nature is a stranger to depravity." The poems themselves cannot be read without awaken-

ing sentiments of virtue. An eloquent vindication of their philosophy may be found in a paper by Signor Radici in the London "Retrospective Review," and, by the Italian scholar, in the Discourse of Benedetto Varchi upon one sonnet of Michael Angelo, contained in the volume of his poems published by Biagioli, from which, in substance, the views of Radici are taken.

Towards his end, there seems to have grown in him an invincible appetite of dying, for he knew that his spirit could only enjoy contentment after death. So vehement was this desire that, he says, "my soul can no longer be appeased by the wonted seductions of painting and sculpture." A fine melancholy, not unrelieved by his habitual heroism, pervades his thoughts on this subject. At the age of eighty years, he wrote to Vasari, sending him various spiritual sonnets he had written, and tells him he "is at the end of his life, that he is careful where he bends his thoughts, that he sees it is already twenty-four o'clock, and no fancy arose in his mind but DEATH was sculptured on it." In conversing upon this subject with one of his friends, that person remarked, that Michael might well grieve that one who was incessant in his creative labors should have no restoration. "No," replied Michael, "it is nothing; for, if life pleases us, death, being a work of the same master, ought not to displease us." But a nobler sentiment, uttered by him, is contained in his reply to a letter of Vasari, who had informed him of the rejoicings made at the house of his nephew Lionardo, at Florence, over the birth of another Buonarotti. Michael admonishes him that "a man ought not to smile, when all those around him weep; and that we ought not to show that joy when a child is born, which should be reserved for the death of one who has lived well."

Amidst all these witnesses to his independence, his generosity, his purity and his devotion, are we not authorized to say that this man was penetrated with the love of the highest beauty, that is, goodness; that his was a soul so enamored of grace, that it could not stoop to meanness or depravity; that art was to him no means of livelihood or road to fame, but the end of living, as it was the organ through which he sought to suggest lessons of an unutterable wisdom; that here was a man who lived to demonstrate that to the human faculties, on every hand, worlds of grandeur and grace are opened, which no profane eye and no indolent eye can behold, but which to see and to enjoy, demands the severest discipline of all the physical, intellectual and moral faculties of the individual?

The city of Florence, on the river Arno, still treasures the fame of this man. There, his picture hangs in every window; there, the tradition of his opinions meets the traveller in every spot. "Do you see that statue of St. George? Michael Angelo asked it why it did not speak." — "Do you see this fine church of Santa Maria Novella? It is that which Michael Angelo called 'his bride.'" — "Look at these bronze gates of the Baptistery, with their high reliefs, cast by Ghiberti five hundred years ago. Michael Angelo said, 'they were fit to be the gates of Paradise.'" — Here is the church, the palace, the Laurentian library he built. Here is his own house. In the church of Santa Croce are his mortal remains. Whilst he was yet alive, he asked that he might be buried in that church, in such a spot that the dome of the cathedral might be visible from his tomb when the doors of the church stood open. And there and so is he laid. The innumerable pil-

grims whom the genius of Italy draws to the city, duly visit this church, which is to Florence what Westminster Abbey is to England. There, near the tomb of Nicholas Machiavelli, the historian and philosopher; of Galileo, the great-hearted astronomer; of Boccaccio, and of Alfieri, stands the monument of Michael Angelo Buonarotti. Three significant garlands are sculptured on the tomb; they should be four, but that his countrymen feared their own partiality. The forehead of the bust, esteemed a faithful likeness, is furrowed with eight deep wrinkles one above another. The traveller from a distant continent, who gazes on that marble brow, feels that he is not a stranger in the foreign church; for the great name of Michael Angelo sounds hospitably in his ear. He was not a citizen of any country; he belonged to the human race; he was a brother and a friend to all who acknowledge the beauty that beams in universal nature, and who seek by labor and self-denial to approach its source in perfect goodness.

MILTON.

I FRAMED his tongue to music,
  I armed his hand with skill,
I moulded his face to beauty,
  And his heart the throne of will.

MILTON.[1]

THE discovery of the lost work of Milton, the treatise "Of the Christian Doctrine," in 1823, drew a sudden attention to his name. For a short time the literary journals were filled with disquisitions on his genius; new editions of his works, and new compilations of his life, were published. But the new-found book having in itself less attraction than any other work of Milton, the curiosity of the public as quickly subsided, and left the poet to the enjoyment of his permanent fame, or to such increase or abatement of it only as is incidental to a sublime genius, quite independent of the momentary challenge of universal attention to his claims.

But if the new and temporary renown of the poet is silent again, it is nevertheless true that he has gained, in this age, some increase of permanent praise. The fame of a great man is not rigid and stony like his bust. It changes with time. It needs time to give it due perspective. It was very easy to remark an altered tone in the criticism when Milton re-appeared as an author, fifteen years ago, from any that had been bestowed on the same subject before. It implied merit

[1] Reprinted from the *North American Review*, July, 1838.

indisputable and illustrious ; yet so near to the modern mind as to be still alive and life-giving. The aspect of Milton, to this generation, will be part of the history of the nineteenth century. There is no name in English literature between his age and ours that rises into any approach to his own. And as a man's fame, of course, characterizes those who give it, as much as him who receives it, the new criticism indicated a change in the public taste, and a change which the poet himself might claim to have wrought.

The reputation of Milton had already undergone one or two revolutions long anterior to its recent aspects. In his lifetime, he was little or not at all known as a poet, but obtained great respect from his contemporaries as an accomplished scholar and a formidable pamphleteer. His poem fell unregarded among his countrymen. His prose writings, especially the "Defence of the English People," seem to have been read with avidity. These tracts are remarkable compositions. They are earnest, spiritual, rich with allusion, sparkling with innumerable ornaments ; but, as writings designed to gain a practical point, they fail. They are not effective, like similar productions of Swift and Burke ; or, like what became also controversial tracts, several masterly speeches in the history of the American Congress. Milton seldom deigns a glance at the obstacles that are to be overcome before that which he proposes can be done. There is no attempt to conciliate, — no mediate, no preparatory course suggested, — but, peremptory and impassioned, he demands, on the instant, an ideal justice. Therein they are discriminated from modern writings, in which a regard to the actual is all but universal.

Their rhetorical excellence must also suffer some deduction. They have no perfectness. These writings are wonderful for the truth, the learning, the subtilty and pomp of the language ; but the whole is sacrificed to the particular. Eager to do fit justice to each thought, he does not subordinate it so as to project the main argument. He writes whilst he is heated ; the piece shows all the rambles and resources of indignation, but he has never *integrated* the parts of the argument in his mind. The reader is fatigued with admiration, but is not yet master of the subject.

Two of his pieces may be excepted from this description, one for its faults, the other for its excellence. The "Defence of the People of England," on which his contemporary fame was founded, is, when divested of its pure Latinity, the worst of his works. Only its general aim, and a few elevated passages, can save it. We could be well content, if the flames to which it was condemned at Paris, at Toulouse, and at London, had utterly consumed it. The lover of his genius will always regret that he should not have taken counsel of his own lofty heart at this, as at other times, and have written from the deep convictions of love and right, which are the foundations of civil liberty. There is little poetry or prophecy in this mean and ribald scolding. To insult Salmasius, not to acquit England, is the main design. What under heaven had Madame de Saumaise, or the manner of living of Saumaise, or Salmasius, or his blunders of grammar, or his niceties of diction, to do with the solemn question whether Charles Stuart had been rightly slain ? Though it evinces learning and critical skill, yet, as an historical argument, it cannot be valued with similar disquisitions of

Robertson and Hallam, and even less celebrated scholars. But, when he comes to speak of the reason of the thing, then he always recovers himself. The voice of the mob is silent, and Milton speaks. And the peroration, in which he implores his countrymen to refute this adversary by their great deeds, is in a just spirit. The other piece is his "Areopagitica," the discourse, addressed to the Parliament, in favor of removing the censorship of the press; the most splendid of his prose works. It is, as Luther said of one of Melancthon's writings, "alive, hath hands and feet, — and not like Erasmus's sentences, which were made, not grown." The weight of the thought is equalled by the vivacity of the expression, and it cheers as well as teaches. This tract is far the best known and the most read of all, and is still a magazine of reasons for the freedom of the press. It is valuable in history as an argument addressed to a government to produce a practical end, and plainly presupposes a very peculiar state of society.

But deeply as that peculiar state of society, in which and for which Milton wrote, has engraved itself in the remembrance of the world, it shares the destiny which overtakes everything local and personal in nature; and the accidental facts on which a battle of principles was fought have already passed, or are fast passing, into oblivion. We have lost all interest in Milton as the redoubted disputant of a sect; but by his own innate worth this man has steadily risen in the world's reverence, and occupies a more imposing place in the mind of men at this hour than ever before.

It is the aspect which he presents to this generation, that alone concerns us. Milton the polemic has lost his popularity long ago; and if we skip the pages of

"Paradise Lost" where "God the Father argues like a school divine," so did the next age to his own. But, we are persuaded, he kindles a love and emulation in us which he did not in foregoing generations. We think we have seen and heard criticism upon the poems, which the bard himself would have more valued than the recorded praise of Dryden, Addison and Johnson, because it came nearer to the mark; was finer and closer appreciation; the praise of intimate knowledge and delight; and, of course, more welcome to the poet than the general and vague acknowledgment of his genius by those able but unsympathizing critics. We think we have heard the recitation of his verses by genius which found in them that which itself would say; recitation which told, in the diamond sharpness of every articulation, that now first was such perception and enjoyment possible; the perception and enjoyment of all his varied rhythm, and his perfect fusion of the classic and the English styles. This is a poet's right; for every masterpiece of art goes on for some ages reconciling the world unto itself, and despotically fashioning the public ear. The opposition to it, always greatest at first, continually decreases and at last ends; and a new race grows up in the taste and spirit of the work, with the utmost advantage for seeing intimately its power and beauty.

But it would be great injustice to Milton to consider him as enjoying merely a critical reputation. It is the prerogative of this great man to stand at this hour foremost of all men in literary history, and so (shall we not say?) of all men, in the power *to inspire*. Virtue goes out of him into others. Leaving out of view the pretensions of our contemporaries (always an in-

calculable influence), we think no man can be named whose mind still acts on the cultivated intellect of England and America with an energy comparable to that of Milton. As a poet, Shakspeare undoubtedly transcends, and far surpasses him in his popularity with foreign nations; but Shakspeare is a voice merely; who and what he was that sang, that sings, we know not. Milton stands erect, commanding, still visible as a man among men, and reads the laws of the moral sentiment to the new-born race. There is something pleasing in the affection with which we can regard a man who died a hundred and sixty years ago in the other hemisphere, who, in respect to personal relations, is to us as the wind, yet by an influence purely spiritual makes us jealous for his fame as for that of a near friend. He is identified in the mind with all select and holy images, with the supreme interests of the human race. If hereby we attain any more precision, we proceed to say that we think no man in these later ages, and few men ever, possessed so great a conception of the manly character. Better than any other he has discharged the office of every great man, namely, to raise the idea of Man in the minds of his contemporaries and of posterity, — to draw after nature a life of man, exhibiting such a composition of grace, of strength and of virtue, as poet had not described nor hero lived. Human nature in these ages is indebted to him for its best portrait. Many philosophers in England, France and Germany, have formerly dedicated their study to this problem; and we think it impossible to recall one in those countries who communicates the same vibration of hope, of self-reverence, of piety, of delight in beauty, which the name of Milton awak-

ens. Lord Bacon, who has written much and with prodigious ability on this science, shrinks and falters before the absolute and uncourtly Puritan. Bacon's Essays are the portrait of an ambitious and profound calculator, — a great man of the vulgar sort. Of the upper world of man's being they speak few and faint words. The man of Locke is virtuous without enthusiasm and intelligent without poetry. Addison, Pope, Hume and Johnson, students, with very unlike temper and success, of the same subject, cannot, taken together, make any pretension to the amount or the quality of Milton's inspirations. The man of Lord Chesterfield is unworthy to touch his garment's hem. Franklin's man is a frugal, inoffensive, thrifty citizen, but savors of nothing heroic. The genius of France has not, even in her best days, yet culminated in any one head, — not in Rousseau, not in Pascal, not in Fénelon, — into such perception of all the attributes of humanity as to entitle it to any rivalry in these lists. In Germany, the greatest writers are still too recent to institute a comparison ; and yet we are tempted to say that art and not life seems to be the end of their effort. But the idea of a purer existence than any he saw around him, to be realized in the life and conversation of men, inspired every act and every writing of John Milton. He defined the object of education to be, "to fit a man to perform justly, skilfully and magnanimously all the offices, both private and public, of peace and war." He declared that "he who would aspire to write well hereafter in laudable things, ought himself to be a true poem ; that is, a composition and pattern of the best and honorablest things, not presuming to sing high praises of heroic men or famous cities, unless

he have in himself the experience and the practice of all that which is praiseworthy." Nor is there in literature a more noble outline of a wise external education, than that which he drew up, at the age of thirty-six, in his Letter to Samuel Hartlib. The muscles, the nerves and the flesh with which this skeleton is to be filled up and covered, exist in his works and must be sought there.

For the delineation of this heroic image of man, Milton enjoyed singular advantages. Perfections of body and of mind are attributed to him by his biographers, that, if the anecdotes had come down from a greater distance of time, or had not been in part furnished or corroborated by political enemies, would lead us to suspect the portraits were ideal, like the Cyrus of Xenophon, the Telemachus of Fénelon, or the popular traditions of Alfred the Great.

Handsome to a proverb, he was called the lady of his college. Aubrey says, "This harmonical and ingenuous soul dwelt in a beautiful and well-proportioned body." His manners and his carriage did him no injustice. Wood, his political opponent, relates that "his deportment was affable, his gait erect and manly, bespeaking courage and undauntedness." Aubrey adds a sharp trait, that "he pronounced the letter R very hard, a certain sign of satirical genius." He had the senses of a Greek. His eye was quick, and he was accounted an excellent master of his rapier. His ear for music was so acute, that he was not only enthusiastic in his love, but a skilful performer himself; and his voice, we are told, was delicately sweet and harmonious. He insists that music shall make a part of a generous education.

With these keen perceptions, he naturally received a

love of nature and a rare susceptibility to impressions from external beauty. In the midst of London, he seems, like the creatures of the field and the forest, to have been tuned in concord with the order of the world; for, he believed, his poetic vein only flowed from the autumnal to the vernal equinox; and, in his essay on Education, he doubts whether, in the fine days of spring, any study can be accomplished by young men. "In those vernal seasons of the year when the air is calm and pleasant, it were an injury and sullenness against nature not to go out and see her riches and partake in her rejoicing with heaven and earth." His sensibility to impressions from beauty needs no proof from his history; it shines through every page. The form and the voice of Leonora Baroni seemed to have captivated him in Rome, and to her he addressed his Italian sonnets and Latin epigrams.

To these endowments it must be added that his address and his conversation were worthy of his fame. His house was resorted to by men of wit, and foreigners came to England, we are told, "to see the Lord Protector and Mr. Milton." In a letter to one of his foreign correspondents, Emeric Bigot, and in reply apparently to some compliment on his powers of conversation, he writes: "Many have been celebrated for their compositions, whose common conversation and intercourse have betrayed no marks of sublimity or genius. But, as far as possible, I aim to show myself equal in thought and speech to what I have written, if I have written anything well."

These endowments received the benefit of a careful and happy discipline. His father's care, seconded by his own endeavor, introduced him to a profound skill

in all the treasures of Latin, Greek, Hebrew and Italian tongues; and, to enlarge and enliven his elegant learning, he was sent into Italy, where he beheld the remains of ancient art, and the rival works of Raphael, Michael Angelo and Correggio; where, also, he received social and academical honors from the learned and the great. In Paris, he became acquainted with Grotius; in Florence or Rome, with Galileo; and probably no traveller ever entered that country of history with better right to its hospitality, none upon whom its influences could have fallen more congenially.

Among the advantages of his foreign travel, Milton certainly did not count it the least that it contributed to forge and polish that great weapon of which he acquired such extraordinary mastery, — his power of language. His lore of foreign tongues added daily to his consummate skill in the use of his own. He was a benefactor of the English tongue by showing its capabilities. Very early in life he became conscious that he had more to say to his fellow-men than they had fit words to embody. At nineteen years, in a college exercise, he addresses his native language, saying to it that it would be his choice to leave trifles for a grave argument,

> "Such as may make thee search thy coffers round,
> Before thou clothe my fancy in fit sound;
> Such where the deep transported mind may soar
> Above the wheeling poles, and at Heaven's door
> Look in, and see each blissful deity,
> How he before the thunderous throne doth lie."

Michael Angelo calls "him alone an artist, whose hands can execute what his mind has conceived." The world, no doubt, contains many of that class of men whom Wordsworth denominates "*silent poets*," whose

minds teem with images which they want words to clothe. But Milton's mind seems to have no thought or emotion which refused to be recorded. His mastery of his native tongue was more than to use it as well as any other; he cast it into new forms. He uttered in it things unheard before. Not imitating but rivalling Shakspeare, he scattered, in tones of prolonged and delicate melody, his pastoral and romantic fancies; then, soaring into unattempted strains, he made it capable of an unknown majesty, and bent it to express every trait of beauty, every shade of thought; and searched the kennel and jakes as well as the palaces of sound for the harsh discords of his polemic wrath. We may even apply to his performance on the instrument of language, his own description of music:

> "—Notes, with many a winding bout
> Of linkëd sweetness long drawn out,
> With wanton heed and giddy cunning,
> The melting voice through mazes running,
> Untwisting all the chains that tie
> The hidden soul of harmony."

But, whilst Milton was conscious of possessing this intellectual voice, penetrating through ages and propelling its melodious undulations forward through the coming world, he knew that this mastery of language was a secondary power, and he respected the mysterious source whence it had its spring; namely, clear conceptions and a devoted heart. "For me," he said, in his "Apology for Smectymnuus," "although I cannot say that I am utterly untrained in those rules which best rhetoricians have given, or unacquainted with those examples which the prime authors of eloquence have written in any learned tongue, yet true eloquence I find to be none but the serious and hearty love of truth; and

that whose mind soever is fully possessed with a fervent desire to know good things, and with the dearest charity to infuse the knowledge of them into others, when such a man would speak, his words, by what I can express, like so many nimble and airy servitors, trip about him at command, and in well-ordered files, as he would wish, fall aptly into their own places."

But, as basis or fountain of his rare physical and intellectual accomplishments, the man Milton was just and devout. He is rightly dear to mankind, because in him, among so many perverse and partial men of genius, — in him humanity rights itself; the old eternal goodness finds a home in his breast, and for once shows itself beautiful. His gifts are subordinated to his moral sentiments. And his virtues are so graceful that they seem rather talents than labors. Among so many contrivances as the world has seen to make holiness ugly, in Milton at least it was so pure a flame, that the foremost impression his character makes is that of elegance. The victories of the conscience in him are gained by the commanding charm which all the severe and restrictive virtues have for him. His virtues remind us of what Plutarch said of Timoleon's victories, that they resembled Homer's verses, they ran so easy and natural. His habits of living were austere. He was abstemious in diet, chaste, an early riser, and industrious. He tells us, in a Latin poem, that the lyrist may indulge in wine and in a freer life; but that he who would write an epic to the nations, must eat beans and drink water. Yet in his severity is no grimace or effort. He serves from love, not from fear. He is innocent and exact, because his taste was so pure and delicate. He acknowledges to his friend Diodati, at the age of twenty-one, that he

is enamored, if ever any was, of moral perfection: "For, whatever the Deity may have bestowed upon me in other respects, he has certainly inspired me, if any ever were inspired, with a passion for the good and fair. Nor did Ceres, according to the fable, ever seek her daughter Proserpine with such unceasing solicitude, as I have sought this τοῦ καλοῦ ἰδέαν, this perfect model of the beautiful in all forms and appearances of things."

When he was charged with loose habits of living, he declares, that "a certain niceness of nature, an honest haughtiness and self-esteem either of what I was or what I might be, and a modesty, kept me still above those low descents of mind beneath which he must deject and plunge himself, that can agree" to such degradation. "His mind gave him," he said, "that every free and gentle spirit, without that oath of chastity, ought to be born a knight; nor needed to expect the gilt spur, or the laying of a sword upon his shoulder, to stir him up, by his counsel and his arm, to secure and protect" attempted innocence.

He states these things, he says, "to show, that, though Christianity had been but slightly taught him, yet a certain reservedness of natural disposition and moral discipline, learned out of the noblest philosophy, was enough to keep him in disdain of far less incontinences than these," that had been charged on him. In like spirit, he replies to the suspicious calumny respecting his morning haunts. "Those morning haunts are where they should be, at home; not sleeping, or concocting the surfeits of an irregular feast, but up and stirring, in winter, often ere the sound of any bell awake men to labor or devotion; in summer, as oft with the

bird that first rouses, or not much tardier, to read good authors, or cause them to be read, till the attention be weary, or memory have its perfect fraught; then with useful and generous labors preserving the body's health and hardiness, to render lightsome, clear, and not lumpish obedience to the mind, to the cause of religion and our country's liberty, when it shall require firm hearts in sound bodies to stand and cover their stations. These are the morning practices." This native honor never forsook him. It is the spirit of "Comus," the loftiest song in the praise of chastity that is in any language. It always sparkles in his eyes. It breathed itself over his decent form. It refined his amusements, which consisted in gardening, in exercise with the sword, and in playing on the organ. It engaged his interest in chivalry, in courtesy, in whatsoever savored of generosity and nobleness. This magnanimity shines in all his life. He accepts a high impulse at every risk, and deliberately undertakes the defence of the English people, when advised by his physicians that he does it at the cost of sight. There is a forbearance even in his polemics. He opens the war and strikes the first blow. When he had cut down his opponents, he left the details of death and plunder to meaner partisans. He said, "he had learned the prudence of the Roman soldier, not to stand breaking of legs, when the breath was quite out of the body."

To this antique heroism, Milton added the genius of the Christian sanctity. Few men could be cited who have so well understood what is peculiar in the Christian ethics, and the precise aid it has brought to men, in being an emphatic affirmation of the omnipotence of spiritual laws, and, by way of marking the contrast to

vulgar opinions, laying its chief stress on humility. The indifferency of a wise mind to what is called high and low, and the fact that true greatness is a perfect humility, are revelations of Christianity which Milton well understood. They give an inexhaustible truth to all his compositions. His firm grasp of this truth is his weapon against the prelates. He celebrates in the martyrs "the unresistible might of weakness." He told the bishops that "instead of showing the reason of their lowly condition from divine example and command, they seek to prove their high preëminence from human consent and authority." He advises that in country places, rather than to trudge many miles to a church, public worship be maintained nearer home, as in a house or barn. "For, notwithstanding the gaudy superstition of some still devoted ignorantly to temples, we may be well assured, that he who disdained not to be born in a manger, disdains not to be preached in a barn." And the following passage, in the "Reason of Church Government," indicates his own perception of the doctrine of humility. "Albeit I must confess to be half in doubt whether I should bring it forth or no, it being so contrary to the eye of the world, that I shall endanger either not to be regarded, or not to be understood. For who is there, almost, that measures wisdom by simplicity, strength by suffering, dignity by lowliness?" Obeying this sentiment, Milton deserved the apostrophe of Wordsworth: —

> "Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
> So didst thou travel on life's common way
> In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
> The lowliest duties on itself did lay."

He laid on himself the lowliest duties. Johnson petu-

lantly taunts Milton with "great promise and small performance," in returning from Italy because his country was in danger, and then opening a private school. Milton, wiser, felt no absurdity in this conduct. He returned into his revolutionized country, and assumed an honest and useful task, by which he might serve the state daily, whilst he launched from time to time his formidable bolts against the enemies of liberty. He felt the heats of that "love" which "esteems no office mean." He compiled a logic for boys; he wrote a grammar; and devoted much of his time to the preparing of a Latin dictionary. But the religious sentiment warmed his writings and conduct with the highest affection of faith. The memorable covenant, which in his youth, in the second book of the "Reason of Church Government," he makes with God and his reader, expressed the faith of his old age. For the first time since many ages, the invocations of the Eternal Spirit in the commencement of his books are not poetic forms, but are thoughts, and so are still read with delight. His views of choice of profession, and choice in marriage, equally expect a divine leading.

Thus chosen, by the felicity of his nature and of his breeding, for the clear perception of all that is graceful and all that is great in man, Milton was not less happy in his times. His birth fell upon the agitated years when the discontents of the English Puritans were fast drawing to a head against the tyranny of the Stuarts. No period has surpassed that in the general activity of mind. It is said that no opinion, no civil, religious, moral dogma can be produced, that was not broached in the fertile brain of that age. Questions that involve all social and personal rights were hasting

to be decided by the sword, and were searched by eyes to which the love of freedom, civil and religious, lent new illumination. Milton, gentle, learned, delicately bred in all the elegancy of art and learning, was set down in England in the stern, almost fanatic society of the Puritans. The part he took, the zeal of his fellowship, make us acquainted with the greatness of his spirit as in tranquil times we could not have known it. Susceptible as Burke to the attractions of historical prescription, of royalty, of chivalry, of an ancient church illustrated by old martyrdoms and installed in cathedrals, — he threw himself, the flower of elegancy, on the side of the reeking conventicle; the side of humanity, but unlearned and unadorned. His muse was brave and humane, as well as sweet. He felt the dear love of native land and native language. The humanity which warms his pages begins as it should, at home. He preferred his own English, so manlike he was, to the Latin, which contained all the treasures of his memory. "My mother bore me," he said, "a speaker of what God made mine own, and not a translator." He told the Parliament, that "the imprimaturs of Lambeth House had been writ in Latin; for that our English, the language of men ever famous and foremost in the achievements of liberty, will not easily find servile letters enow to spell such a dictatory presumption." At one time he meditated writing a poem on the settlement of Britain, and a history of England was one of the three main tasks which he proposed to himself. He proceeded in it no further than to the Conquest. He studied with care the character of his countrymen, and once in the "History," and once again in the "Reason of Church Government," he has recorded his judgment of the English genius.

Thus drawn into the great controversies of the times, in them he is never lost in a party. His private opinions and private conscience always distinguish him. That which drew him to the party was his love of liberty, ideal liberty ; this therefore he could not sacrifice to any party. Toland tells us, "As he looked upon true and absolute freedom to be the greatest happiness of this life, whether to societies or single persons, so he thought constraint of any sort to be the utmost misery ; for which reason he used to tell those about him the entire satisfaction of his mind, that he had constantly employed his strength and faculties in the defence of liberty, and in direct opposition to slavery." Truly he was an apostle of freedom ; of freedom in the house, in the state, in the church ; freedom of speech, freedom of the press, yet in his own mind discriminated from savage license, because that which he desired was the liberty of the wise man, containing itself in the limits of virtue. He pushed, as far as any in that democratic age, his ideas of *civil* liberty. He proposed to establish a republic, of which the federal power was weak and loosely defined, and the substantial power should remain with primary assemblies. He maintained, that a nation may try, judge, and slay their king, if he be a tyrant. He pushed as far his views of *ecclesiastical* liberty. He taught the doctrine of unlimited toleration. One of his tracts is writ to prove that no power on earth can compel in matters of religion. He maintained the doctrine of *literary* liberty, denouncing the censorship of the press, and insisting that a book shall come into the world as freely as a man, so only it bear the name of author or printer, and be responsible for itself like a man. He maintained the

doctrine of *domestic* liberty, or the liberty of divorce, on the ground that unfit disposition of mind was a better reason for the act of divorce than infirmity of body, which was good ground in law. The tracts he wrote on these topics are, for the most part, as fresh and pertinent to-day as they were then. The events which produced them, the practical issues to which they tend, are mere occasions for this philanthropist to blow his trumpet for human rights. They are all varied applications of one principle, the liberty of the wise man. He sought absolute truth, not accommodating truth. His opinions on all subjects are formed for man as he ought to be, for a nation of Miltons. He would be divorced when he finds in his consort unfit disposition; knowing that he should not abuse that liberty, because with his whole heart he abhors licentiousness and loves chastity. He defends the slaying of the king, because a king is a king no longer than he governs by the laws; "it would be right to kill Philip of Spain making an inroad into England, and what right the king of Spain hath to govern us at all, the same hath the king Charles to govern tyrannically." He would remove hirelings out of the church, and support preachers by voluntary contributions; requiring that such only should preach as have faith enough to accept so self-denying and precarious a mode of life, scorning to take thought for the aspects of prudence and expediency. The most devout man of his time, he frequented no church; probably from a disgust at the fierce spirit of the pulpits. And so, throughout all his actions and opinions, is he a consistent spiritualist, or believer in the omnipotence of spiritual laws. He wished that his writings should be communicated only to those who desired to see them.

He thought nothing honest was low. He thought he could be famous only in proportion as he enjoyed the approbation of the good. He admonished his friend "not to admire military prowess, or things in which force is of most avail. For it would not be matter of rational wonder, if the wethers of our country should be born with horns that could batter down cities and towns. Learn to estimate great characters, not by the amount of animal strength, but by the habitual justice and temperance of their conduct."

Was there not a fitness in the undertaking of such a person to write a poem on the subject of Adam, the first man? By his sympathy with all nature; by the proportion of his powers; by great knowledge, and by religion, he would reascend to the height from which our nature is supposed to have descended. From a just knowledge of what man should be, he described what he was. He beholds him as he walked in Eden: —

> "His fair large front and eye sublime declared
> Absolute rule; and hyacinthine locks
> Round from his parted forelock manly hung
> Clustering, but not beneath his shoulders broad."

And the soul of this divine creature is excellent as his form. The tone of his thought and passion is as healthful, as even, and as vigorous, as befits the new and perfect model of a race of gods.

The perception we have attributed to Milton, of a purer ideal of humanity, modifies his poetic genius. The man is paramount to the poet. His fancy is never transcendent, extravagant; but, as Bacon's imagination was said to be "the noblest that ever contented itself to minister to the understanding," so Milton's ministers to the character. Milton's sublimest song, bursting

into heaven with its peals of melodious thunder, is the voice of Milton still. Indeed, throughout his poems, one may see under a thin veil, the opinions, the feelings, even the incidents of the poet's life, still reappearing. The sonnets are all occasional poems. "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" are but a finer autobiography of his youthful fancies at Harefield; the "Comus" a transcript, in charming numbers, of that philosophy of chastity, which, in the "Apology for Smectymnuus," and in the "Reason of Church Government," he declares to be his defence and religion. The "Samson Agonistes" is too broad an expression of his private griefs to be mistaken, and is a version of the "Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce." The most affecting passages in "Paradise Lost" are personal allusions; and, when we are fairly in Eden, Adam and Milton are often difficult to be separated. Again, in "Paradise Regained," we have the most distinct marks of the progress of the poet's mind, in the revision and enlargement of his religious opinions. This may be thought to abridge his praise as a poet. It is true of Homer and Shakspeare that they do not appear in their poems; that those prodigious geniuses did cast themselves so totally into their song, that their individuality vanishes, and the poet towers to the sky, whilst the man quite disappears. The fact is memorable. Shall we say that in our admiration and joy in these wonderful poems we have even a feeling of regret that the men knew not what they did; that they were too passive in their great service; were channels through which streams of thought flowed from a higher source, which they did not appropriate, did not blend with their own being? Like prophets, they seem but

imperfectly aware of the import of their own utterances. We hesitate to say such things, and say them only to the unpleasing dualism, when the man and the poet show like a double consciousness. Perhaps we speak to no fact, but to mere fables, of an idle mendicant Homer, and of a Shakspeare content with a mean and jocular way of life. Be it how it may, the genius and office of Milton were different, namely, to ascend by the aids of his learning and his religion, — by an equal perception, that is, of the past and the future, — to a higher insight and more lively delineation of the heroic life of man. This was his poem ; whereof all his indignant pamphlets and all his soaring verses are only single cantos or detached stanzas. It was plainly needful that his poetry should be a version of his own life, in order to give weight and solemnity to his thoughts ; by which they might penetrate and possess the imagination and the will of mankind. The creations of Shakspeare are cast into the world of thought to no further end than to delight. Their intrinsic beauty is their excuse for being. Milton, fired "with dearest charity to infuse the knowledge of good things into others," tasked his giant imagination and exhausted the stores of his intellect for an end beyond, namely, to teach. His own conviction it is which gives such authority to his strain. Its reality is its force. If out of the heart it came, to the heart it must go. What schools and epochs of common rhymers would it need to make a counterbalance to the severe oracles of his muse :

> "In them is plainest taught and easiest learnt,
> What makes a nation happy, and keeps it so."

The lover of Milton reads one sense in his prose and

in his metrical compositions ; and sometimes the muse soars highest in the former, because the thought is more sincere. Of his prose in general, not the style alone but the argument also is poetic ; according to Lord Bacon's definition of poetry, following that of Aristotle, " Poetry, not finding the actual world exactly conformed to its idea of good and fair, seeks to accommodate the shows of things to the desires of the mind, and to create an ideal world better than the world of experience." Such certainly is the explanation of Milton's tracts. Such is the apology to be entered for the plea for freedom of divorce ; an essay, which, from the first until now, has brought a degree of obloquy on his name. It was a sally of the extravagant spirit of the time, overjoyed, as in the French Revolution, with the sudden victories it had gained, and eager to carry on the standard of truth to new heights. It is to be regarded as a poem on one of the griefs of man's condition, namely, unfit marriage. And as many poems have been written upon unfit society, commending solitude, yet have not been proceeded against, though their end was hostile to the state ; so should this receive that charity which an angelic soul, suffering more keenly than others from the unavoidable evils of human life, is entitled to.

We have offered no apology for expanding to such length our commentary on the character of John Milton ; who, in old age, in solitude, in neglect, and blind, wrote the Paradise Lost ; a man whom labor or danger never deterred from whatever efforts a love of the supreme interests of man prompted. For are we not the better ; are not all men fortified by the remembrance of the bravery, the purity, the temperance, the toil, the

independence and the angelic devotion of this man, who, in a revolutionary age, taking counsel only of himself, endeavored, in his writings and in his life, to carry out the life of man to new heights of spiritual grace and dignity, without any abatement of its strength ?

PAPERS FROM THE DIAL.

THE tongue is prone to lose the way;
Not so the pen, for in a letter
We have not better things to say,
But surely say them better.

PAPERS FROM THE DIAL.

I.

THOUGHTS ON MODERN LITERATURE.[1]

In our fidelity to the higher truth we need not disown our debt, in our actual state of culture, in the twilights of experience, to these rude helpers. They keep alive the memory and the hope of a better day. When we flout all particular books as initial merely, we truly express the privilege of spiritual nature, but alas, not the fact and fortune of this low Massachusetts and Boston, of these humble Junes and Decembers of mortal life. Our souls are not self-fed, but do eat and drink of chemical water and wheat. Let us not forget the genial miraculous force we have known to proceed from a book. We go musing into the vault of day and night; no constellation shines, no muse descends, the stars are white points, the roses brick-colored leaves, and frogs pipe, mice cheep, and wagons creak along the road. We return to the house and take up Plutarch or Augustine, and read a few sentences or pages, and lo! the air swims with life, secrets of magnanimity and grandeur invite us on every hand, life is made up

[1] *The Dial*, vol. i. p. 137.

of them. Such is our debt to a book. Observe moreover that we ought to credit literature with much more than the bare word it gives us. I have just been reading poems which now in memory shine with a certain steady, warm, autumnal light. That is not in their grammatical construction which they give me. If I analyze the sentences it eludes me, but is the genius and suggestion of the whole. Over every true poem lingers a certain wild beauty, immeasurable ; a happiness lightsome and delicious fills the heart and brain, as they say every man walks environed by his proper atmosphere, extending to some distance around him. This beautiful result must be credited to literature also in casting its account.

In looking at the library of the Present Age, we are first struck with the fact of the immense miscellany. It can hardly be characterized by any species of book, for every opinion, old and new, every hope and fear, every whim and folly has an organ. It exhibits a vast carcass of tradition every year with as much solemnity as a new revelation. Along with these it vents books that breathe of new morning, that seem to heave with the life of millions, books for which men and women peak and pine ; books which take the rose out of the cheek of him that wrote them, and give him to the midnight a sad, solitary, diseased man ; which leave no man where they found him, but make him better or worse ; and which work dubiously on society and seem to inoculate it with a venom before any healthy result appears.

In order to any complete view of the literature of the present age, an inquiry should include what it quotes, what it writes and what it wishes to write. In

our present attempt to enumerate some traits of the recent literature, we shall have somewhat to offer on each of these topics, but we cannot promise to set in very exact order what we have to say.

In the first place it has all books. It reprints the wisdom of the world. How can the age be a bad one which gives me Plato and Paul and Plutarch, St. Augustine, Spinoza, Chapman, Beaumont and Fletcher, Donne and Sir Thomas Browne, beside its own riches? Our presses groan every year with new editions of all the select pieces of the first of mankind, — meditations, history, classifications, opinions, epics, lyrics, which the age adopts by quoting them. If we should designate favorite studies in which the age delights more than in the rest of this great mass of the permanent literature of the human race, one or two instances would be conspicuous. First; the prodigious growth and influence of the genius of Shakspeare, in the last one hundred and fifty years, is itself a fact of the first importance. It almost alone has called out the genius of the German nation into an activity which spreading from the poetic into the scientific, religious and philosophical domains, has made theirs now at last the paramount intellectual influence of the world, reacting with great energy on England and America. And thus, and not by mechanical diffusion, does an original genius work and spread himself.

The poetry and speculation of the age are marked by a certain philosophic turn, which discriminates them from the works of earlier times. The poet is not content to see how "Fair hangs the apple from the rock," "What music a sunbeam awoke in the groves," nor of Hardiknute, how "Stately steppes he east the way, and

stately steppes he west," but he now revolves, What is the apple to me? and what the birds to me? and what is Hardiknute to me? and what am I? And this is called subjectiveness, as the eye is withdrawn from the object and fixed on the subject or mind.

We can easily concede that a steadfast tendency of this sort appears in modern literature. It is the new consciousness of the one mind, which predominates in criticism. It is the uprise of the soul, and not the decline. It is founded on that insatiable demand for unity, the need to recognize one nature in all the variety of objects, which always characterizes a genius of the first order. Accustomed always to behold the presence of the universe in every part, the soul will not condescend to look at any new part as a stranger, but saith, — "I know all already, and what art thou? Show me thy relations to me, to all, and I will entertain thee also."

There is a pernicious ambiguity in the use of the term *subjective*. We say, in accordance with the general view I have stated, that the single soul feels its right to be no longer confounded with numbers, but itself to sit in judgment on history and literature, and to summon all facts and parties before its tribunal. And in this sense the age is subjective.

But, in all ages, and now more, the narrow-minded have no interest in anything but in its relation to their personality. What will help them to be delivered from some burden, eased in some circumstance, flattered or pardoned or enriched; what will help to marry or to divorce them, to prolong or to sweeten life, is sure of their interest; and nothing else. Every form under the whole heaven they behold in this most partial light

or darkness of intense selfishness, until we hate their being. And this habit of intellectual selfishness has acquired in our day the fine name of subjectiveness.

Nor is the distinction between these two habits to be found in the circumstance of using the first person singular, or reciting facts and feelings of personal history. A man may say I, and never refer to himself as an individual; and a man may recite passages of his life with no feeling of egotism. Nor need a man have a vicious subjectiveness because he deals in abstract propositions.

But the criterion which discriminates these two habits in the poet's mind is the tendency of his composition; namely, whether it leads us to nature, or to the person of the writer. The great always introduce us to facts; small men introduce us always to themselves. The great man, even whilst he relates a private fact personal to him, is really leading us away from him to an universal experience. His own affection is in nature, in *what is*, and, of course, all his communication leads outward to it, starting from whatsoever point. The great never with their own consent become a load on the minds they instruct. The more they draw us to them, the farther from them or more independent of them we are, because they have brought us to the knowledge of somewhat deeper than both them and us. The great never hinder us; for their activity is coincident with the sun and moon, with the course of the rivers and of the winds, with the stream of laborers in the street and with all the activity and well-being of the race. The great lead us to nature, and in our age to metaphysical nature, to the invisible awful facts, to moral abstractions, which are not less nature than is a river or a

coal-mine, — nay, they are far more nature, — but its essence and soul.

But the weak and wicked, led also to analyze, saw nothing in thought but luxury. Thought for the selfish became selfish. They invited us to contemplate nature, and showed us an abominable self. Would you know the genius of the writer? Do not enumerate his talents or his feats, but ask thyself, What spirit is he of? Do gladness and hope and fortitude flow from his page into thy heart? Has he led thee to nature because his own soul was too happy in beholding her power and love? Or is his passion for the wilderness only the sensibility of the sick, the exhibition of a talent which only shines whilst you praise it; which has no root in the character, and can thus minister to the vanity but not to the happiness of the possessor; and which derives all its *éclat* from our conventional education, but would not make itself intelligible to the wise man of another age or country? The water we wash with never speaks of itself, nor does fire or wind or tree. Neither does the noble natural man: he yields himself to your occasion and use, but his act expresses a reference to universal good.

Another element of the modern poetry akin to this subjective tendency, or rather the direction of that same on the question of resources, is the Feeling of the Infinite. Of the perception now fast becoming a conscious fact, — that there is One Mind, and that all the powers and privileges which lie in any, lie in all; that I as a man may claim and appropriate whatever of true or fair or good or strong has anywhere been exhibited; that Moses and Confucius, Montaigne and Leibnitz are not so much individuals as they are parts of man and parts

of me, and my intelligence proves them my own, — literature is far the best expression. It is true, this is not the only nor the obvious lesson it teaches. A selfish commerce and government have caught the eye and usurped the hand of the masses. It is not to be contested that selfishness and the senses write the laws under which we live, and that the street seems to be built and the men and women in it moving, not in reference to pure and grand ends, but rather to very short and sordid ones. Perhaps no considerable minority, no one man, leads a quite clean and lofty life. What then? We concede in sadness the fact. But we say that these low customary ways are not all that survives in human beings. There is that in us which mutters, and that which groans, and that which triumphs, and that which aspires. There are facts on which men of the world superciliously smile, which are worth all their trade and politics; which drive young men into gardens and solitary places, and cause extravagant gestures, starts, distortions of the countenance, and passionate exclamations; sentiments, which find no aliment or language for themselves on the wharves, in court, or market, but which are soothed by silence, by darkness, by the pale stars, and the presence of nature. All over the modern world the educated and susceptible have betrayed their discontent with the limits of our municipal life, and with the poverty of our dogmas of religion and philosophy. They betray this impatience by fleeing for resource to a conversation with nature, which is courted in a certain moody and exploring spirit, as if they anticipated a more intimate union of man with the world than has been known in recent ages. Those who cannot tell what they desire or expect, still sigh and strug-

gle with indefinite thoughts and vast wishes. The very child in the nursery prattles mysticism, and doubts and philosophizes. A wild striving to express a more inward and infinite sense characterizes the works of every art. The music of Beethoven is said, by those who understand it, to labor with vaster conceptions and aspirations than music has attempted before. This feeling of the Infinite has deeply colored the poetry of the period. This new love of the vast, always native in Germany, was imported into France by De Staël, appeared in England in Coleridge, Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, Felicia Hemans, and finds a most genial climate in the American mind. Scott and Crabbe, who formed themselves on the past, had none of this tendency; their poetry is objective. In Byron, on the other hand, it predominates; but in Byron it is blind, it sees not its true end — an infinite good, alive and beautiful, a life nourished on absolute beatitudes, descending into nature to behold itself reflected there. His will is perverted, he worships the accidents of society, and his praise of nature is thieving and selfish.

Nothing certifies the prevalence of this taste in the people more than the circulation of the poems, — one would say most incongruously united by some bookseller, — of Coleridge, Shelley and Keats. The only unity is in the subjectiveness and the aspiration common to the three writers. Shelley, though a poetic mind, is never a poet. His muse is uniformly imitative; all his poems composite. A good English scholar he is, with ear, taste, and memory; much more, he is a character full of noble and prophetic traits; but imagination, the original, authentic fire of the bard, he has not. He is clearly modern, and shares with Richter, Chateau-

briand, Manzoni and Wordsworth, the feeling of the infinite, which so labors for expression in their different genius. But all his lines are arbitrary, not necessary. When we read poetry, the mind asks, — Was this verse one of twenty which the author might have written as well; or is this what that man was created to say ? But, whilst every line of the true poet will be genuine, he is in a boundless power and freedom to say a million things. And the reason why he can say one thing well, is because his vision extends to the sight of all things, and so he describes each as one who knows many and all.

The fame of Wordsworth is a leading fact in modern literature, when it is considered how hostile his genius at first seemed to the reigning taste, and with what limited poetic talents his great and steadily growing dominion has been established. More than any poet his success has been not his own but that of the idea which he shared with his coevals, and which he has rarely succeeded in adequately expressing. The Excursion awakened in every lover of Nature the right feeling. We saw stars shine, we felt the awe of mountains, we heard the rustle of the wind in the grass, and knew again the ineffable secret of solitude. It was a great joy. It was nearer to Nature than anything we had before. But the interest of the poem ended almost with the narrative of the influences of Nature on the mind of the Boy, in the First Book. Obviously for that passage the poem was written, and with the exception of this and of a few strains of the like character in the sequel, the whole poem was dull. Here was no poem, but here was poetry, and a sure index where the subtle muse was about to pitch her tent and find the

argument of her song. It was the human soul in these last ages striving for a just publication of itself. Add to this, however, the great praise of Wordsworth, that more than any other contemporary bard he is pervaded with a reverence of somewhat higher than (conscious) thought. There is in him that property common to all great poets, a wisdom of humanity, which is superior to any talents which they exert. It is the wisest part of Shakspeare and of Milton. For they are poets by the free course which they allow to the informing soul, which through their eyes beholdeth again and blesseth the things which it hath made. The soul is superior to its knowledge, wiser than any of its works.

With the name of Wordsworth rises to our recollection the name of his contemporary and friend, Walter Savage Landor — a man working in a very different and peculiar spirit, yet one whose genius and accomplishments deserve a wiser criticism than we have yet seen applied to them, and the rather that his name does not readily associate itself with any school of writers. Of Thomas Carlyle, also, we shall say nothing at this time, since the quality and energy of his influence on the youth of this country will require at our hands, erelong, a distinct and faithful acknowledgment.

But of all men he who has united in himself, and that in the most extraordinary degree, the tendencies of the era, is the German poet, naturalist and philosopher, Goethe. Whatever the age inherited or invented, he made his own. He has owed to Commerce and to the victories of the Understanding, all their spoils. Such was his capacity, that the magazines of the world's ancient or modern wealth, which arts and intercourse and skepticism could command, — he wanted them all.

Had there been twice so much, he could have used it as well. Geologist, mechanic, merchant, chemist, king, radical, painter, composer, — all worked for him, and a thousand men seemed to look through his eyes. He learned as readily as other men breathe. Of all the men of this time, not one has seemed so much at home in it as he. He was not afraid to live. And in him this encyclopædia of facts, which it has been the boast of the age to compile, wrought an equal effect. He was knowing ; he was brave ; he was clean from all narrowness ; he has a perfect propriety and taste, — a quality by no means common to the German writers. Nay, since the earth as we said had become a reading-room, the new opportunities seem to have aided him to be that resolute realist he is, and seconded his sturdy determination to see things for what they are. To look at him one would say there was never an observer before. What sagacity, what industry of observation. To read his record is a frugality of time, for you shall find no word that does not stand for a thing, and he is of that comprehension which can see the value of truth. His love of Nature has seemed to give a new meaning to that word. There was never man more domesticated in this world than he. And he is an apology for the analytic spirit of the period, because, of his analysis, always wholes were the result. All conventions, all traditions he rejected. And yet he felt his entire right and duty to stand before and try and judge every fact in nature. He thought it necessary to dot round with his own pen the entire sphere of knowables ; and for many of his stories, this seems the only reason: Here is a piece of humanity I had hitherto omitted to sketch ; — take this. He does not say so

in syllables, — yet a sort of conscientious feeling he had to be *up* to the universe, is the best account and apology for many of them. He shared also the subjectiveness of the age, and that too in both the senses I have discriminated. With the sharpest eye for form, color, botany, engraving, medals, persons and manners, he never stopped at surface, but pierced the purpose of a thing and studied to reconcile that purpose with his own being. What he could so reconcile was good ; what he could not, was false. Hence a certain greatness encircles every fact he treats ; for to him it has a soul, an eternal reason why it was so, and not otherwise. This is the secret of that deep realism, which went about among all objects he beheld, to find the cause why they must be what they are. It was with him a favorite task to find a theory of every institution, custom, art, work of art, which he observed. Witness his explanation of the Italian mode of reckoning the hours of the day, as growing out of the Italian climate ; of the obelisk of Egypt, as growing out of a common natural fracture in the granite parallelopiped in Upper Egypt ; of the Doric architecture, and the Gothic ; of the Venetian music of the gondolier, originating in the habit of the fishers' wives of the Lido singing on shore to their husbands on the sea ; of the amphitheatre, which is the enclosure of the natural cup of heads that arranges itself round every spectacle in the street ; of the coloring of Titian and Paul Veronese, which one may verify in common daylight in Venice every afternoon ; of the Carnival at Rome ; of the domestic rural architecture in Italy ; and many the like examples.

But also that other vicious subjectiveness, that vice of the time, infected him also. We are provoked with

his Olympian self-complacency, the patronizing air with which he vouchsafes to tolerate the genius and performances of other mortals, "the good Hiller," "our excellent Kant," "the friendly Wieland," &c. &c. There is a good letter from Wieland to Merck, in which Wieland relates that Goethe read to a select party his journal of a tour in Switzerland with the Grand Duke, and their passage through the Vallais and over the St. Gothard. "It was," says Wieland, "as good as Xenophon's Anabasis. The piece is one of his most masterly productions, and is thought and written with the greatness peculiar to him. The fair hearers were enthusiastic at the nature in this piece ; I liked the sly art in the composition, whereof they saw nothing, still better. It is a true poem, so concealed is the art too. But what most remarkably in this, as in all his other works, distinguishes him from Homer and Shakspeare, is, that the Me, the *Ille ego*, everywhere glimmers through, although without any boasting and with an infinite fineness." This subtle element of egotism in Goethe certainly does not seem to deform his compositions, but to lower the moral influence of the man. He differs from all the great in the total want of frankness. Who saw Milton, who saw Shakspeare, saw them do their best, and utter their whole heart manlike among their brethren. No man was permitted to call Goethe brother. He hid himself, and worked always to astonish, which is egotism, and therefore little.

If we try Goethe by the ordinary canons of criticism, we should say that his thinking is of great altitude, and all level ; not a succession of summits, but a high Asiatic table-land. Dramatic power, the rarest talent in literature, he has very little. He has an eye con-

stant to the fact of life and that never pauses in its advance. But the great felicities, the miracles of poetry, he has never. It is all design with him, just thought and instructed expression, analogies, allusion, illustration, which knowledge and correct thinking supply; but of Shakspeare and the transcendent muse, no syllable. Yet in the court and law to which we ordinarily speak, and without adverting to absolute standards, we claim for him the praise of truth, of fidelity to his intellectual nature. He is the king of all scholars. In these days and in this country, where the scholars are few and idle, where men read easy books and sleep after dinner, it seems as if no book could so safely be put in the hands of young men as the letters of Goethe, which attest the incessant activity of this man, to eighty years, in an endless variety of studies, with uniform cheerfulness and greatness of mind. They cannot be read without shaming us into an emulating industry. Let him have the praise of the love of truth. We think, when we contemplate the stupendous glory of the world, that it were life enough for one man merely to lift his hands and cry with St. Augustine, "Wrangle who pleases, I will wonder." Well, this he did. Here was a man who, in the feeling that the thing itself was so admirable as to leave all comment behind, went up and down, from object to object, lifting the veil from every one, and did no more. What he said of Lavater, may trulier be said of him, that "it was fearful to stand in the presence of one before whom all the boundaries within which Nature has circumscribed our being were laid flat." His are the bright and terrible eyes which meet the modern student in every sacred chapel of thought, in every public enclosure.

But now, that we may not seem to dodge the question which all men ask, nor pay a great man so ill a compliment as to praise him only in the conventional and comparative speech, let us honestly record our thought upon the total worth and influence of this genius. Does he represent, not only the achievement of that age in which he lived, but that which it would be and is now becoming? And what shall we think of that absence of the moral sentiment, that singular equivalence to him of good and evil in action, which discredit his compositions to the pure? The spirit of his biography, of his poems, of his tales, is identical, and we may here set down by way of comment on his genius the impressions recently awakened in us by the story of Wilhelm Meister.

All great men have written proudly, nor cared to explain. They knew that the intelligent reader would come at last, and would thank them. So did Dante, so did Machiavel. Goethe has done this in Meister. We can fancy him saying to himself: — There are poets enough of the Ideal; let me paint the Actual, as, after years of dreams, it will still appear and reappear to wise men. That all shall right itself in the long Morrow, I may well allow, and my novel may wait for the same regeneration. The age, that can damn it as false and falsifying, will see that it is deeply one with the genius and history of all the centuries. I have given my characters a bias to error. Men have the same. I have let mischance befall instead of good fortune. They do so daily. And out of many vices and misfortunes, I have let a great success grow, as I had known in my own and many other examples. Fierce churchmen and effeminate aspirants will chide and hate my

name, but every keen beholder of life will justify my truth, and will acquit me of prejudging the cause of humanity by painting it with this morose fidelity. To a profound soul is not austere truth the sweetest flattery?

Yes, O Goethe! but the ideal is truer than the actual. That is ephemeral, but this changes not. Moreover, because nature is moral, that mind only can see, in which the same order entirely obtains. An interchangeable Truth, Beauty and Goodness, each wholly interfused in the other, must make the humors of that eye which would see causes reaching to their last effect and reproducing the world forever. The least inequality of mixture, the excess of one element over the other, in that degree diminishes the transparency of things, makes the world opaque to the observer, and destroys so far the value of his experience. No particular gifts can countervail this defect. In reading Meister, I am charmed with the insight; to use a phrase of Ben Jonson's, "it is rammed with life." I find there actual men and women even too faithfully painted. I am moreover instructed in the possibility of a highly accomplished society, and taught to look for great talent and culture under a gray coat. But this is all. The limits of artificial society are never quite out of sight. The vicious conventions, which hem us in like prison walls and which the poet should explode at his touch, stand for all they are worth in the newspaper. We are never lifted above ourselves, we are not transported out of the dominion of the senses, or cheered with an infinite tenderness, or armed with a grand trust.

Goethe, then, must be set down as the poet of the

Actual, not of the Ideal; the poet of limitation, not of possibility; of this world, and not of religion and hope; in short, if we may say so, the poet of prose, and not of poetry. He accepts the base doctrine of Fate, and gleans what straggling joys may yet remain out of its ban. He is like a banker or a weaver with a passion for the country; he steals out of the hot streets before sunrise, or after sunset, or on a rare holiday, to get a draft of sweet air and a gaze at the magnificence of summer, but dares not break from his slavery and lead a man's life in a man's relation to nature. In that which should be his own place, he feels like a truant, and is scourged back presently to his task and his cell. Poetry is with Goethe thus external, the gilding of the chain, the mitigation of his fate; but the Muse never assays those thunder-tones which cause to vibrate the sun and the moon, which dissipate by dreadful melody all this iron network of circumstance, and abolish the old heavens and the old earth before the freewill or Godhead of man. That Goethe had not a moral perception proportionate to his other powers, is not then merely a circumstance, as we might relate of a man that he had or had not the sense of tune or an eye for colors, but it is the cardinal fact of health or disease; since, lacking this, he failed in the high sense to be a creator, and, with divine endowments, drops by irreversible decree into the common history of genius. He was content to fall into the track of vulgar poets and spend on common aims his splendid endowments, and has declined the office proffered to now and then a man in many centuries in the power of his genius, of a Redeemer of the human mind. He has written better than other poets only as his talent was subtler, but the

ambition of creation he refused. Life for him is prettier, easier, wiser, decenter, has a gem or two more on its robe, but its old eternal burden is not relieved; no drop of healthier blood flows yet in its veins. Let him pass. Humanity must wait for its physician still at the side of the road, and confess as this man goes out, that they have served it better who assured it out of the innocent hope in their hearts that a Physician will come, than this majestic Artist, with all the treasuries of wit, of science, and of power at his command.

The criticism, which is not so much spoken as felt in reference to Goethe, instructs us directly in the hope of literature. We feel that a man gifted like him should not leave the world as he found it. It is true, though somewhat sad, that every fine genius teaches us how to blame himself. Being so much, we cannot forgive him for not being more. When one of these grand monads is incarnated whom nature seems to design for eternal men and draw to her bosom, we think that the old weariness of Europe and Asia, the trivial forms of daily life will now end, and a new morning break on us all. What is Austria? What is England? What is our graduated and petrified social scale of ranks and employments? Shall not a poet redeem us from these idolatries, and pale their legendary lustre before the fires of the Divine Wisdom which burn in his heart? All that in our sovereign moments each of us has divined of the powers of thought, all the hints of omnipresence and energy which we have caught, this man should unfold, and constitute facts.

And this is the insatiable craving which alternately saddens and gladdens men at this day. The Doctrine of the Life of Man established after the truth through

all his faculties; — this is the thought which the literature of this hour meditates and labors to say. This is that which tunes the tongue and fires the eye and sits in the silence of the youth. Verily it will not long want articulate and melodious expression. There is nothing in the heart but comes presently to the lips. The very depth of the sentiment, which is the author of all the cutaneous life we see, is guarantee for the riches of science and of song in the age to come. He who doubts whether this age or this country can yield any contribution to the literature of the world, only betrays his own blindness to the necessities of the human soul. Has the power of poetry ceased, or the need? Have the eyes ceased to see that which they would have, and which they have not? Have they ceased to see other eyes? Are there no lonely, anxious, wondering children, who must tell their tale? Are we not evermore whipped by thoughts;

> "In sorrow steeped, and steeped in love
> Of thoughts not yet incarnated."

The heart beats in this age as of old, and the passions are busy as ever. Nature has not lost one ringlet of her beauty, one impulse of resistance and valor. From the necessity of loving none are exempt, and he that loves must utter his desires. A charm as radiant as beauty ever beamed, a love that fainteth at the sight of its object, is new to-day.

> "The world does not run smoother than of old,
> There are sad haps that must be told."

Man is not so far lost but that he suffers ever the great Discontent which is the elegy of his loss and the prediction of his recovery. In the gay saloon he laments

that these figures are not what Raphael and Guercino painted. Withered though he stand, and trifler though he be, the august spirit of the world looks out from his eyes. In his heart he knows the ache of spiritual pain, and his thought can animate the sea and land. What then shall hinder the Genius of the time from speaking its thought? It cannot be silent, if it would. It will write in a higher spirit and a wider knowledge and with a grander practical aim than ever yet guided the pen of poet. It will write the annals of a changed world, and record the descent of principles into practice, of love into Government, of love into Trade. It will describe the new heroic life of man, the now unbelieved possibility of simple living and of clean and noble relations with men. Religion will bind again these that were sometime frivolous, customary, enemies, skeptics, self-seekers, into a joyful reverence for the circumambient Whole, and that which was ecstacy shall become daily bread.

II.

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.[1]

We sometimes meet in a stage coach in New England an erect, muscular man, with fresh complexion and a smooth hat, whose nervous speech instantly betrays the English traveller; — a man nowise cautious to conceal his name or that of his native country, or his very slight esteem for the persons and the country that surround him. When Mr. Bull rides in an American coach, he speaks quick and strong; he is very ready to

[1] *The Dial*, vol. ii. p. 262.

confess his ignorance of everything about him, persons, manners, customs, politics, geography. He wonders that the Americans should build with wood, whilst all this stone is lying in the roadside; and is astonished to learn that a wooden house may last a hundred years; nor will he remember the fact as many minutes after it has been told him: he wonders that they do not make elder-wine and cherry-bounce, since here are cherries, and every mile is crammed with elder-bushes. He has never seen a good horse in America, nor a good coach, nor a good inn. Here is very good earth and water and plenty of them; that he is free to allow; to all other gifts of nature or man his eyes are sealed by the inexorable demand for the precise conveniences to which he is accustomed in England. Add to this proud blindness the better quality of great downrightness in speaking the truth, and the love of fair play, on all occasions, and moreover the peculiarity which is alleged of the Englishman, that his virtues do not come out until he quarrels.

Transfer these traits to a very elegant and accomplished mind, and we shall have no bad picture of Walter Savage Landor, who may stand as a favorable impersonation of the genius of his countrymen at the present day. A sharp, dogmatic man, with a great deal of knowledge, a great deal of worth, and a great deal of pride; with a profound contempt for all that he does not understand; a master of all elegant learning, and capable of the utmost delicacy of sentiment, and yet prone to indulge a sort of ostentation of coarse imagery and language. His partialities and dislikes are by no means culpable, but are often whimsical and amusing; yet they are quite sincere, and, like those of

Johnson and Coleridge, are easily separable from the man. What he says of Wordsworth is true of himself, that he delights to throw a clod of dirt on the table, and cry "Gentlemen, there is a better man than all of you." Bolivar, Mina and General Jackson will never be greater soldiers than Napoleon and Alexander, let Mr. Landor think as he will; nor will he persuade us to burn Plato and Xenophon, out of our admiration of Bishop Patrick, or "Lucas on Happiness," or "Lucas on Holiness," or even Barrow's Sermons. Yet a man may love a paradox without either losing his wit or his honesty. A less pardonable eccentricity is the cold and gratuitous obtrusion of licentious images, not so much the suggestion of merriment as of bitterness. Montaigne assigns as a reason for his license of speech, that he is tired of seeing his Essays on the work-tables of ladies, and he is determined they shall for the future put them out of sight. In Mr. Landor's coarseness there is a certain air of defiance, and the rude word seems sometimes to arise from a disgust at niceness and over-refinement. Before a well-dressed company he plunges his fingers in a cesspool, as if to expose the whiteness of his hands and the jewels of his ring. Afterward, he washes them in water, he washes them in wine; but you are never secure from his freaks. A sort of Earl Peterborough in literature, his eccentricity is too decided not to have diminished his greatness. He has capital enough to have furnished the brain of fifty stock authors, yet has written no book.

But we have spoken all our discontent. Possibly his writings are open to harsher censure ; but we love the man, from sympathy as well as for reasons to be assigned ; and have no wish, if we were able, to put an

argument in the mouth of his critics. Now for twenty years we have still found the "Imaginary Conversations" a sure resource in solitude, and it seems to us as original in its form as in its matter. Nay, when we remember his rich and ample page, wherein we are always sure to find free and sustained thought, a keen and precise understanding, an affluent and ready memory familiar with all chosen books, an industrious observation in every department of life, an experience to which nothing has occurred in vain, honor for every just and generous sentiment and a scourge like that of Furies for every oppressor, whether public or private, — we feel how dignified is this perpetual Censor in his curule chair, and we wish to thank a benefactor of the reading world.

Mr. Landor is one of the foremost of that small class who make good in the nineteenth century the claims of pure literature. In these busy days of avarice and ambition, when there is so little disposition to profound thought or to any but the most superficial intellectual entertainments, a faithful scholar, receiving from past ages the treasures of wit and enlarging them by his own love, is a friend and consoler of mankind. When we pronounce the names of Homer and Æschylus; Horace, Ovid and Plutarch; Erasmus, Scaliger and Montaigne; Ben Jonson and Isaak Walton; Dryden and Pope, — we pass at once out of trivial associations and enter into a region of the purest pleasure accessible to human nature. We have quitted all beneath the moon and entered that crystal sphere in which everything in the world of matter reappears, but transfigured and immortal. Literature is the effort of man to indemnify himself for the wrongs of his condition.

The existence of the poorest play-wright and the humblest scrivener is a good omen. A charm attaches to the most inferior names which have in any manner got themselves enrolled in the registers of the House of Fame, even as porters and grooms in the courts ; to Creech and Fenton, Theobald and Dennis, Aubrey and Spence. From the moment of entering a library and opening a desired book, we cease to be citizens, creditors, debtors, housekeepers and men of care and fear. What boundless leisure ! what original jurisdiction ! the old constellations have set, new and brighter have arisen ; an Elysian light tinges all objects : —

> "In the afternoon we came unto a land
> In which it seemed always afternoon."

And this sweet asylum of an intellectual life must appear to have the sanction of nature, as long as so many men are born with so decided an aptitude for reading and writing. Let us thankfully allow every faculty and art which opens new scope to a life so confined as ours. There are vast spaces in a thought : a slave, to whom the religious sentiment is opened, has a freedom which makes his master's freedom a slavery. Let us not be so illiberal with our schemes for the renovation of society and nature as to disesteem or deny the literary spirit. Certainly there are heights in nature which command this ; there are many more which this commands. It is vain to call it a luxury, and as saints and reformers are apt to do, decry it as a species of day-dreaming. What else are sanctities, and reforms, and all other things ? Whatever can make for itself an element, means, organs, servants, and the most profound and permanent existence in the hearts and heads of millions of men, must have a rea-

son for its being. Its excellency is reason and vindication enough. If rhyme rejoices us there should be rhyme, as much as if fire cheers us we should bring wood and coals. Each kind of excellence takes place for its hour and excludes everything else. Do not brag of your actions, as if they were better than Homer's verses or Raphael's pictures. Raphael and Homer feel that action is pitiful beside their enchantments. They could act too, if the stake was worthy of them: but now all that is good in the universe urges them to their task. Whoever writes for the love of truth and beauty, and not with ulterior ends, belongs to this sacred class; and among these, few men of the present age have a better claim to be numbered than Mr. Landor. Wherever genius or taste has existed, wherever freedom and justice are threatened, which he values as the element in which genius may work, his interest is sure to be commanded. His love of beauty is passionate, and betrays itself in all petulant and contemptuous expressions.

But beyond his delight in genius and his love of individual and civil liberty, Mr. Landor has a perception that is much more rare, the appreciation of character. This is the more remarkable considered with his intense nationality, to which we have already alluded. He is buttoned in English broadcloth to the chin. He hates the Austrians, the Italians, the French, the Scotch, and the Irish. He has the common prejudices of an English landholder; values his pedigree, his acres and the syllables of his name; loves all his advantages, is not insensible to the beauty of his watch seal, or the Turk's head on his umbrella; yet with all this miscellaneous pride there is a noble nature within him which

instructs him that he is so rich that he can well spare all his trappings, and, leaving to others the painting of circumstance, aspire to the office of delineating character. He draws his own portrait in the costume of a village schoolmaster, and a sailor, and serenely enjoys the victory of nature over fortune. Not only the elaborated story of Normanby, but the whimsical selection of his heads proves this taste. He draws with evident pleasure the portrait of a man who never said anything right and never did anything wrong. But in the character of Pericles he has found full play for beauty and greatness of behavior, where the circumstances are in harmony with the man. These portraits, though mere sketches, must be valued as attempts in the very highest kind of narrative, which not only has very few examples to exhibit of any success, but very few competitors in the attempt. The word Character is in all mouths ; it is a force which we all feel ; yet who has analyzed it ? What is the nature of that subtle and majestic principle which attaches us to a few persons, not so much by personal as by the most spiritual ties ? What is the quality of the persons who, without being public men, or literary men, or rich men, or active men, or (in the popular sense) religious men, have a certain salutary omnipresence in all our life's history, almost giving their own quality to the atmosphere and the landscape ? A moral force, yet wholly unmindful of creed and catechism, intellectual, but scornful of books, it works directly and without means, and though it may be resisted at any time, yet resistance to it is a suicide. For the person who stands in this lofty relation to his fellow-men is always the impersonation to them of their conscience. It is a sufficient proof of

the extreme delicacy of this element, evanescing before any but the most sympathetic vision, that it has so seldom been employed in the drama and in novels. Mr. Landor, almost alone among living English writers, has indicated his perception of it.

These merits make Mr. Landor's position in the republic of letters one of great mark and dignity. He exercises with a grandeur of spirit the office of writer, and carries it with an air of old and unquestionable nobility. We do not recollect an example of more complete independence in literary history. He has no clanship, no friendships that warp him. He was one of the first to pronounce Wordsworth the great poet of the age, yet he discriminates his faults with the greater freedom. He loves Pindar, Æschylus, Euripides, Aristophanes, Demosthenes, Virgil, yet with open eyes. His position is by no means the highest in literature : he is not a poet or a philosopher. He is a man full of thoughts, but not, like Coleridge, a man of ideas. Only from a mind conversant with the First Philosophy can definitions be expected. Coleridge has contributed many valuable ones to modern literature. Mr. Landor's definitions are only enumerations of particulars ; the generic law is not seized. But as it is not from the highest Alps or Andes but from less elevated summits that the most attractive landscape is commanded, so is Mr. Landor the most useful and agreeable of critics. He has commented on a wide variety of writers, with a closeness and extent of view which has enhanced the value of those authors to his readers. His Dialogue on the Epicurean philosophy is a theory of the genius of Epicurus. The Dialogue between Barrow and Newton is the best of all criticisms on the essays of Bacon. His

picture of Demosthenes in three several Dialogues is new and adequate. He has illustrated the genius of Homer, Æschylus, Pindar, Euripides, Thucydides. Then he has examined before he has expatiated, and the minuteness of his verbal criticism gives a confidence in his fidelity when he speaks the language of meditation or of passion. His acquaintance with the English tongue is unsurpassed. He "hates false words, and seeks with care, difficulty and moroseness those that fit the thing." He knows the value of his own words. "They are not," he says, "written on slate.' He never stoops to explanation, nor uses seven words where one will do. He is a master of condensation and suppression, and that in no vulgar way. He knows the wide difference between compression and an obscure elliptical style. The dense writer has yet ample room and choice of phrase, and even a gamesome mood often between his valid words. There is no inadequacy or disagreeable contraction in his sentence, any more than in a human face, where in a square space of a few inches is found room for every possible variety of expression.

Yet it is not as an artist that Mr. Landor commends himself to us. He is not epic or dramatic, he has not the high, overpowering method by which the master gives unity and integrity to a work of many parts. He is too wilful, and never abandons himself to his genius. His books are a strange mixture of politics, etymology, allegory, sentiment, and personal history; and what skill of transition he may possess is superficial, not spiritual. His merit must rest, at last, not on the spirit of the dialogue or the symmetry of any of his historical portraits, but on the value of his sentences. Many of these will secure their own immortality in

English literature; and this, rightly considered, is no mean merit. These are not plants and animals, but the genetical atoms of which both are composed. All our great debt to the Oriental world is of this kind, not utensils and statues of the precious metal, but bullion and gold-dust. Of many of Mr. Landor's sentences we are fain to remember what was said of those of Socrates; that they are cubes, which will stand firm, place them how or where you will.

III.

PRAYERS.[1]

"Not with fond shekels of the tested gold,
Nor gems whose rates are either rich or poor
As fancy values them: but with true prayers,
That shall be up at heaven and enter there
Ere sunrise; prayers from preserved souls,
From fasting maids, whose minds are dedicate
To nothing temporal." SHAKSPEARE.

PYTHAGORAS said that the time when men are honestest is when they present themselves before the gods. If we can overhear the prayer we shall know the man. But prayers are not made to be overheard, or to be printed, so that we seldom have the prayer otherwise than it can be inferred from the man and his fortunes, which are the answer to the prayer, and always accord with it. Yet there are scattered about in the earth a few records of these devout hours, which it would edify us to read, could they be collected in a more catholic spirit than the wretched and repulsive volumes which

[1] *The Dial*, vol. iii. p. 77.

usurp that name. Let us not have the prayers of one sect, nor of the Christian Church, but of men in all ages and religions who have prayed well. The prayer of Jesus is (as it deserves) become a form for the human race. Many men have contributed a single expression, a single word to the language of devotion, which is immediately caught and stereotyped in the prayers of their church and nation. Among the remains of Euripides we have this prayer: "Thou God of all! infuse light into the souls of men, whereby they may be enabled to know what is the root from whence all their evils spring, and by what means they may avoid them." In the Phædrus of Plato, we find this petition in the mouth of Socrates: "O gracious Pan! and ye other gods who preside over this place! grant that I may be beautiful within; and that those external things which I have may be such as may best agree with a right internal disposition of mine; and that I may account him to be rich, who is wise and just." Wacic the Caliph, who died A. D. 845, ended his life, the Arabian historians tell us, with these words: "O thou whose kingdom never passes away, pity one whose dignity is so transient." But what led us to these remembrances was the happy accident which in this undevout age lately brought us acquainted with two or three diaries, which attest, if there be need of attestation, the eternity of the sentiment and its equality to itself through all the variety of expression. The first is the prayer of a deaf and dumb boy: —

"When my long-attached friend comes to me, I have pleasure to converse with him, and I rejoice to pass my eyes over his countenance; but soon I am weary of

spending my time causelessly and unimproved, and I desire to leave him, (but not in rudeness), because I wished to be engaged in my business. But thou, O my Father, knowest I always delight to commune with thee in my lone and silent heart ; I am never full of thee ; I am never weary of thee ; I am always desiring thee. I hunger with strong hope and affection for thee, and I thirst for thy grace and spirit.

" When I go to visit my friends, I must put on my best garments, and I must think of my manner to please them. I am tired to stay long, because my mind is not free, and they sometimes talk gossip with me. But oh, my Father, thou visitest me in my work, and I can lift up my desires to thee, and my heart is cheered and at rest with thy presence, and I am always alone with thee, and thou dost not steal my time by foolishness. I always ask in my heart, where can I find thee ? "

The next is a voice out of a solitude as strict and sacred as that in which nature had isolated this eloquent mute : —

" My Father, when I cannot be cheerful or happy, I can be true and obedient, and I will not forget that joy has been, and may still be. If there is no hour of solitude granted me, still I will commune with thee. If I may not search out and pierce thy thought, so much the more may my living praise thee. At whatever price, I must be alone with thee ; this must be the demand I make. These duties are not the life, but the means which enable us to show forth the life. So must I take up this cross, and bear it willingly. Why should

I feel reproved when a busy one enters the room? I am not idle, though I sit with folded hands, but instantly I must seek some cover. For that shame I reprove myself. Are they only the valuable members of society who labor to dress and feed it? Shall we never ask the aim of all this hurry and foam, of this aimless activity? Let the purpose for which I live be always before me; let every thought and word go to confirm and illuminate that end; namely, that I must become near and dear to thee; that now I am beyond the reach of all but thee.

"How can we not be reconciled to thy will? I will know the joy of giving to my friend the dearest treasure I have. I know that sorrow comes not at once only. We cannot meet it and say, now it is overcome, but again, and yet again, its flood pours over us, and as full as at first.

> "If but this tedious battle could be fought,
> Like Sparta's heroes at one rocky pass,
> 'One day be spent in dying,' men had sought
> The spot, and been cut down like mower's grass."

The next is in a metrical form. It is the aspiration of a different mind, in quite other regions of power and duty, yet they all accord at last.

> "Great God, I ask thee for no meaner pelf
> Than that I may not disappoint myself,
> That in my action I may soar as high,
> As I can now discern with this clear eye.
>
> "And next in value, which thy kindness lends,
> That I may greatly disappoint my friends,
> Howe'er they think or hope that it may be,
> They may not dream how thou 'st distinguished me.
>
> "That my weak hand may equal my firm faith,
> And my life practise more than my tongue saith;

That my low conduct may not show,
Nor my relenting lines,
That I thy purpose did not know,
Or overrated thy designs."

The last of the four orisons is written in a singularly calm and healthful spirit, and contains this petition : —

"My Father: I now come to thee with a desire to thank thee for the continuance of our love, the one for the other. I feel that without thy love in me I should be alone here in the flesh. I cannot express my gratitude for what thou hast been and continuest to be to me. But thou knowest what my feelings are. When nought on earth seemeth pleasant to me, thou dost make thyself known to me, and teach that which is needful for me, and dost cheer my travels on. I know that thou hast not created me and placed me here on earth, amidst its toils and troubles and the follies of those around me, and told me to be like thyself when I see so little of thee here to profit by ; thou hast not done this, and then left me here to myself, a poor, weak man, scarcely able to earn my bread. No ; thou art my Father and I will love thee, for thou didst first love me, and lovest me still. We will ever be parent and child. Wilt thou give me strength to persevere in this great work of redemption. Wilt thou show me the true means of accomplishing it. . . . I thank thee for the knowledge that I have attained of thee by thy sons who have been before me, and especially for him who brought me so perfect a type of thy goodness and love to men. . . . I know that thou wilt deal with me as I deserve. I place myself therefore in thy hand, knowing that thou wilt keep me from harm so long as I consent to live under thy protecting care."

Let these few scattered leaves, which a chance (as men say, but which to us shall be holy) brought under our eye nearly at the same moment, stand as an example of innumerable similar expressions which no mortal witness has reported, and be a sign of the times. Might they be suggestion to many a heart of yet higher secret experiences which are ineffable! But we must not tie up the rosary on which we have strung these few white beads, without adding a pearl of great price from that book of prayer, the "Confessions of Saint Augustine."

"And being admonished to reflect upon myself, I entered into the very inward parts of my soul, by thy conduct; and I was able to do it, because now thou wert become my helper. I entered and discerned with the eye of my soul (such as it was), even beyond my soul and mind itself, the Light unchangeable. Not this vulgar light which all flesh may look upon, nor as it were a greater of the same kind, as though the brightness of this should be manifold greater and with its greatness take up all space. Not such was this light, but other, yea, far other from all these. Neither was it so above my understanding as oil swims above water, or as the heaven is above the earth. But it is above me, because it made me; and I am under it, because I was made by it. He that knows truth or verity, knows what that light is, and he that knows it, knows eternity, and it is known by charity. O eternal Verity! and true Charity! and dear Eternity! thou art my God, to thee do I sigh day and night. Thee when I first knew, thou liftedst me up that I might see, there was what I might see, and that I was not yet such as to see. And

thou didst beat back my weak sight upon myself, shooting out beams upon me after a vehement manner ; and I even trembled between love and horror, and I found myself to be far off, and even in the very region of dissimilitude from thee.''

IV.

AGRICULTURE OF MASSACHUSETTS.[1]

In an afternoon in April, after a long walk, I traversed an orchard where boys were grafting apple-trees, and found the Farmer in his corn-field. He was holding the plough, and his son driving the oxen. This man always impresses me with respect, he is so manly, so sweet-tempered, so faithful, so disdainful of all appearances, — excellent and reverable in his old weather-worn cap and blue frock bedaubed with the soil of the field ; so honest withal, that he always needs to be watched lest he should cheat himself. I still remember with some shame that in some dealing we had together a long time ago, I found that he had been looking to my interest in the affair, and I had been looking to my interest, and nobody had looked to his part. As I drew near this brave laborer in the midst of his own acres, I could not help feeling for him the highest respect. Here is the Cæsar, the Alexander of the soil, conquering and to conquer, after how many and many a hard-fought summer's day and winter's day ; not like Napoleon, hero of sixty battles only, but of six thousand, and out of every one he has come vic-

[1] *The Dial*, vol. iii. p. 123.

tor; and here he stands, with Atlantic strength and cheer, invincible still. These slight and useless city limbs of ours will come to shame before this strong soldier, for his have done his own work and ours too. What good this man has or has had, he has earned. No rich father or father-in-law left him any inheritance of land or money. He borrowed the money with which he bought his farm, and has bred up a large family, given them a good education, and improved his land in every way year by year, and this without prejudice to himself the landlord, for here he is, a man every inch of him, and reminds us of the hero of the Robin Hood ballad, —

> "Much, the miller's son,
> There was no inch of his body
> But it was worth a groom."

Innocence and justice have written their names on his brow. Toil has not broken his spirit. His laugh rings with the sweetness and hilarity of a child; yet he is a man of a strongly intellectual taste, of much reading, and of an erect good sense and independent spirit which can neither brook usurpation nor falsehood in any shape. I walked up and down the field, as he ploughed his furrow, and we talked as we walked. Our conversation naturally turned on the season and its new labors. He had been reading the Report of the Agricultural Survey of the Commonwealth, and had found good things in it; but it was easy to see that he felt toward the author much as soldiers do towards the historiographer who follows the camp, more good-nature than reverence for the gownsman.

The First Report, he said, is better than the last, as I observe the first sermon of a minister is often his best,

for every man has one thing which he specially wishes to say, and that comes out at first. But who is this book written for? Not for farmers; no pains are taken to send it to them; it was by accident that this volume came into my hands for a few days. And it is not for them. They could not afford to follow such advice as is given here; they have sterner teachers; their own business teaches them better. No; this was written for the literary men. But in that case, the state should not be taxed to pay for it. Let us see. The account of the maple sugar, — that is very good and entertaining, and, I suppose, true. The story of the farmer's daughter, whom education had spoiled for everything useful on a farm, — that is good too, and we have much that is like it in Thomas's Almanack. But why this recommendation of stone houses? They are not so cheap, not so dry, and not so fit for us. Our roads are always changing their direction, and after a man has built at great cost a stone house, a new road is opened, and he finds himself a mile or two from the highway. Then our people are not stationary, like those of old countries, but always alert to better themselves, and will remove from town to town as a new market opens or a better farm is to be had, and do not wish to spend too much on their buildings.

The Commissioner advises the farmers to sell their cattle and their hay in the fall, and buy again in the spring. But we farmers always know what our interest dictates, and do accordingly. We have no choice in this matter; our way is but too plain. Down below, where manure is cheap and hay dear, they will sell their oxen in November; but for me to sell my cattle and my produce in the fall, would be to sell my

farm, for I should have no manure to renew a crop in the spring. And thus Necessity farms it; necessity finds out when to go to Brighton, and when to feed in the stall, better than Mr. Colman can tell us.

But especially observe what is said throughout these Reports of the model farms and model farmers. One would think that Mr. D. and Major S. were the pillars of the Commonwealth. The good Commissioner takes off his hat when he approaches them, distrusts the value of "his feeble praise," and repeats his compliments as often as their names are introduced. And yet, in my opinion, Mr. D., with all his knowledge and present skill, would starve in two years on any one of fifty poor farms in this neighborhood, on each of which now a farmer manages to get a good living. Mr. D. inherited a farm, and spends on it every year from other resources; otherwise his farm had ruined him long since; — and as for the Major, he never got rich by his skill in making land produce, but in making men produce. The truth is, a farm will not make an honest man rich in money. I do not know of a single instance in which a man has honestly got rich by farming alone. It cannot be done. The way in which men who have farms grow rich, is either by other resources, or by trade, or by getting their labor for nothing, or by other methods of which I could tell you many sad anecdotes. What does the Agricultural Surveyor know of all this? What can he know? He is the victim of the "Reports" that are sent him, of particular farms. He cannot go behind the estimates to know how the contracts were made, and how the sales were effected. The true men of skill, the poor farmers, who, by the sweat of their face, without an inheritance and without

offence to their conscience have reared a family of valuable citizens and matrons to the state, reduced a stubborn soil to a good farm, — although their buildings are many of them shabby, are the only right subjects of this Report ; yet these make no figure in it. These should be holden up to imitation, and their methods detailed ; yet their houses are very uninviting and inconspicuous to State Commissioners. So with these premiums to farms, and premiums at cattle-shows. The class that I describe must pay the premium which is awarded to the rich. Yet the premium obviously ought to be given for the good management of a poor farm.

In this strain the Farmer proceeded, adding many special criticisms. He had a good opinion of the Surveyor, and acquitted him of any blame in the matter, but was incorrigible in his skepticism concerning the benefits conferred by legislatures on the agriculture of Massachusetts. I believe that my friend is a little stiff and inconvertible in his own opinions, and that there is another side to be heard ; but so much wisdom seemed to lie under all his statement that it deserved a record.

V.

EUROPE AND EUROPEAN BOOKS.[1]

It was a brighter day than we have often known in our literary calendar, when within a twelvemonth a single London advertisement announced a new volume of poems by Wordsworth, poems by Tennyson, and a

1 *The Dial*, vol. iii. p. 511.

play by Henry Taylor. Wordsworth's nature or character has had all the time it needed in order to make its mark and supply the want of talent. We have learned how to read him. We have ceased to expect that which he cannot give. He has the merit of just moral perception, but not that of deft poetic execution. How would Milton curl his lip at such slipshod newspaper style. Many of his poems, as for example the Rylstone Doe, might be all improvised. Nothing of Milton, nothing of Marvell, of Herbert, of Dryden, could be. These are such verses as in a just state of culture should be *vers de société*, such as every gentleman could write but none would think of printing, or of claiming the poet's laurel on their merit. The Pindar, the Shakspeare, the Dante, whilst they have the just and open soul, have also the eye to see the dimmest star that glimmers in the Milky Way, the serratures of every leaf, the test-objects of the microscope, and then the tongue to utter the same things in words that engrave them on all the ears of mankind. The poet demands all gifts, and not one or two only.

The poet, like the electric rod, must reach from a point nearer the sky than all surrounding objects, down to the earth, and into the dark wet soil, or neither is of use. The poet must not only converse with pure thought, but he must demonstrate it almost to the senses. His words must be pictures, his verses must be spheres and cubes, to be seen and smelled and handled. His fable must be a good story, and its meaning must hold as pure truth. In the debates on the Copyright Bill, in the English Parliament, Mr. Sergeant Wakley, the coroner, quoted Wordsworth's poetry in derision, and asked the roaring House of Commons what that

meant, and whether a man should have public reward for writing such stuff. Homer, Horace, Milton and Chaucer would defy the coroner. Whilst they have wisdom to the wise, he would see that to the external they have external meaning. Coleridge excellently said of poetry, that poetry must first be good sense ; as a palace might well be magnificent, but first it must be a house.

Wordsworth is open to ridicule of this kind. And yet Wordsworth, though satisfied if he can suggest to a sympathetic mind his own mood, and though setting a private and exaggerated value on his compositions ; though confounding his accidental with the universal consciousness, and taking the public to task for not admiring his poetry, — is really a master of the English language, and his poems evince a power of diction that is no more rivalled by his contemporaries than is his poetic insight. But the capital merit of Wordsworth is that he has done more for the sanity of this generation than any other writer. Early in life, at a crisis it is said in his private affairs, he made his election between assuming and defending some legal rights, with the chances of wealth and a position in the world, — and the inward promptings of his heavenly genius ; he took his part ; he accepted the call to be a poet, and sat down, far from cities, with coarse clothing and plain fare to obey the heavenly vision. The choice he had made in his will, manifested itself in every line to be real. We have poets who write the poetry of society, of the patrician and conventional Europe, as Scott and Moore, and others who, like Byron or Bulwer, write the poetry of vice and disease. But Wordsworth threw himself into his place, made no reserves

or stipulations ; man and writer were not to be divided. He sat at the foot of Helvellyn and on the margin of Windermere, and took their lustrous mornings and their sublime midnights for his theme, and not Marlow, nor Massinger, not Horace, nor Milton, nor Dante. He once for all forsook the styles and standards and modes of thinking of London and Paris, and the books read there, and the aims pursued, and wrote Helvellyn and Windermere, and the dim spirits which these haunts harbored. There was not the least attempt to reconcile these with the spirit of fashion and selfishness, nor to show, with great deference to the superior judgment of dukes and earls, that although London was the home for men of great parts, yet Westmoreland had these consolations for such as fate had condemned to the country life, — but with a complete satisfaction he pitied and rebuked their false lives, and celebrated his own with the religion of a true priest. Hence the antagonism which was immediately felt between his poetry and the spirit of the age, that here not only criticism but conscience and will were parties ; the spirit of literature and the modes of living and the conventional theories of the conduct of life were called in question on wholly new grounds, — not from Platonism, not from Christianity, but from the lessons which the country muse taught a stout pedestrian climbing a mountain and following a river from its parent rill down to the sea. The Cannings and Jeffreys of the capital, the Court Journals and Literary Gazettes were not well pleased, and voted the poet a bore. But that which rose in him so high as to the lips, rose in many others as high as to the heart. What he said, they were prepared to hear and confirm. The influ-

ence was in the air, and was wafted up and down into lone and into populous places, resisting the popular taste, modifying opinions which it did not change, and soon came to be felt in poetry, in criticism, in plans of life, and at last in legislation. In this country it very early found a stronghold, and its effect may be traced on all the poetry both of England and America.

But, notwithstanding all Wordsworth's grand merits, it was a great pleasure to know that Alfred Tennyson's two volumes were coming out in the same ship ; it was a great pleasure to receive them. The elegance, the wit and subtlety of this writer, his rich fancy, his power of language, his metrical skill, his independence of any living masters, his peculiar topics, his taste for the costly and gorgeous, discriminate the musky poet of gardens and conservatories, of parks and palaces. Perhaps we felt the popular objection that he wants rude truth ; he is too fine. In these boudoirs of damask and alabaster, one is farther off from stern nature and human life than in " Lalla Rookh " and " The Loves of the Angels." Amid swinging censers and perfumed lamps, amidst velvet and glory we long for rain and frost. Otto-of-roses is good, but wild air is better. A critical friend of ours affirms that the vice which bereaved modern painters of their power, is the ambition to begin where their fathers ended ; to equal the masters in their exquisite finish, instead of their religious purpose. The painters are not willing to paint ill enough ; they will not paint for their times, agitated by the spirit which agitates their country ; so should their picture picture us and draw all men after them ; but they copy the technics of their predecessors, and paint for their predecessors' public. It seems as if the same

vice had worked in poetry. Tennyson's compositions are not so much poems as studies in poetry, or sketches after the styles of sundry old masters. He is not the husband, who builds the homestead after his own necessity, from foundation-stone to chimney-top and turret, but a tasteful bachelor who collects quaint staircases and groined ceilings. We have no right to such superfineness. We must not make our bread of pure sugar. These delicacies and splendors are then legitimate when they are the excess of substantial and necessary expenditure. The best songs in English poetry are by that heavy, hard, pedantic poet, Ben Jonson. Jonson is rude, and only on rare occasions gay. Tennyson is always fine ; but Jonson's beauty is more grateful than Tennyson's. It is a natural manly grace of a robust workman. Ben's flowers are not in pots at a city florist's, arranged on a flower-stand, but he is a countryman at a harvest-home, attending his ox-cart from the fields, loaded with potatoes and apples, with grapes and plums, with nuts and berries, and stuck with boughs of hemlock and sweetbriar, with ferns and pond lilies which the children have gathered. But let us not quarrel with our benefactors. Perhaps Tennyson is too quaint and elegant. What then ? It is long since we have had as good a lyrist ; it will be long before we have his superior. "Godiva" is a noble poem that will tell the legend a thousand years. The poem of all the poetry of the present age for which we predict the longest term, is "Abou ben Adhem," of Leigh Hunt. Fortune will still have her part in every victory, and it is strange that one of the best poems should be written by a man who has hardly written any other. And "Godiva" is a parable which belongs to

the same gospel. "Locksley Hall" and "The Two Voices" are meditative poems, which were slowly written to be slowly read. "The Talking Oak," though a little hurt by its wit and ingenuity, is beautiful, and the most poetic of the volume. "Ulysses" belongs to a high class of poetry, destined to be the highest, and to be more cultivated in the next generation. "Œnone" was a sketch of the same kind. One of the best specimens we have of the class is Wordsworth's "Laodamia," of which no special merit it can possess equals the total merit of having selected such a subject in such a spirit.

Next to the poetry, the novels, which come to us in every ship from England, have an importance increased by the immense extension of their circulation through the new cheap press, which sends them to so many willing thousands. We have heard it alleged with some evidence that the prominence given to intellectual power in Bulwer's romances has proved a main stimulus to mental culture in thousands of young men in England and America. The effect on manners cannot be less sensible, and we can easily believe that the behavior of the ball-room and of the hotel has not failed to draw some addition of dignity and grace from the fair ideals with which the imagination of a novelist has filled the heads of the most imitative class.

We are not very well versed in these books, yet we have read Mr. Bulwer enough to see that the story is rapid and interesting; he has really seen London society, and does not draw ignorant caricatures. He is not a genius, but his novels are marked with great energy and with a courage of experiment which in each instance had its degree of success. The story of Zanoni

was one of those world-fables which is so agreeable to the human imagination that it is found in some form in the language of every country, and is always reappearing in literature. Many of the details of this novel preserve a poetic truth. We read Zanoni with pleasure, because magic is natural. It is implied in all superior culture that a complete man would need no auxiliaries to his personal presence. The eye and the word are certainly far subtler and stronger weapons than either money or knives. Whoever looked on the hero would consent to his will, being certified that his aims were universal, not selfish ; and he would be obeyed as naturally as the rain and the sunshine are. For this reason, children delight in fairy tales. Nature is described in them as the servant of man, which they feel ought to be true. But Zanoni pains us and the author loses our respect, because he speedily betrays that he does not see the true limitations of the charm ; because the power with which his hero is armed is a toy, inasmuch as the power does not flow from its legitimate fountains in the mind, is a power for London ; a divine power converted into a burglar's false key or a highwayman's pistol to rob and kill with.

But Mr. Bulwer's recent stories have given us who do not read novels, occasion to think of this department of literature, supposed to be the natural fruit and expression of the age. We conceive that the obvious division of modern romance is into two kinds: first, the novels of costume or of circumstance, which is the old style, and vastly the most numerous. In this class, the hero, without any particular character, is in a very particular circumstance; he is greatly in want of a fortune or of a wife, and usually of both, and the business of the piece

is to provide him suitably. This is the problem to be solved in thousands of English romances, including the Porter novels and the more splendid examples of the Edgeworth and Scott romances.

It is curious how sleepy and foolish we are, that these tales will so take us. Again and again we have been caught in that old foolish trap. Had one noble thought opening the chambers of the intellect, one sentiment from the heart of God been spoken by them, the reader had been made a participator of their triumph; he too had been an invited and eternal guest; but this reward granted them is property, all-excluding property, a little cake baked for them to eat and for none other, nay, a preference and cosseting which is rude and insulting to all but the minion.

Except in the stories of Edgeworth and Scott, whose talent knew how to give to the book a thousand adventitious graces, the novels of costume are all one, and there is but one standard English novel, like the one orthodox sermon, which with slight variation is repeated every Sunday from so many pulpits.

But the other novel, of which "Wilhelm Meister" is the best specimen, the novel of *character*, treats the reader with more respect; the development of character being the problem, the reader is made a partaker of the whole prosperity. Everything good in such a story remains with the reader when the book is closed. A noble book was "Wilhelm Meister." It gave the hint of a cultivated society which we found nowhere else. It was founded on power to do what was necessary, each person finding it an indispensable qualification of membership that he could do something useful, as in mechanics or agriculture or other indispensable art;

then a probity, a justice was to be its element, symbolized by the insisting that each property should be cleared of privilege, and should pay its full tax to the state. Then a perception of beauty was the equally indispensable element of the association, by which each was dignified and all were dignified; then each was to obey his genius to the length of abandonment. They watched each candidate vigilantly, without his knowing that he was observed, and when he had given proof that he was a faithful man, then all doors, all houses, all relations were open to him; high behavior fraternized with high behavior, without question of heraldry, and the only power recognized is the force of character.

The novels of Fashion, of D'Israeli, Mrs. Gore, Mr. Ward, belong to the class of novels of costume, because the aim is purely external success. Of the tales of fashionable life, by far the most agreeable and the most efficient was Vivian Grey. Young men were and still are the readers and victims. Byron ruled for a time, but Vivian, with no tithe of Byron's genius, rules longer. One can distinguish the Vivians in all companies. They would quiz their father and mother and lover and friend. They discuss sun and planets, liberty and fate, love and death, over the soup. They never sleep, go nowhere, stay nowhere, eat nothing, and know nobody, but are up to anything, though it were the genesis of nature, or the last cataclysm, — Festus-like, Faust-like, Jove-like, and could write an Iliad any rainy morning, if fame were not such a bore. Men, women, though the greatest and fairest, are stupid things; but a rifle, and a mild pleasant gunpowder, a spaniel, and a cheroot, are themes for Olympus. I fear it was in part the influence of such pictures on living society

which made the style of manners of which we have so many pictures, as, for example, in the following account of the English fashionist. "His highest triumph is to appear with the most wooden manners, as little polished as will suffice to avoid castigation, nay, to contrive even his civilities so that they may appear as near as may be to affronts; instead of a noble high-bred ease, to have the courage to offend against every restraint of decorum, to invert the relation in which our sex stand to women, so that they appear the attacking, and he the passive or defensive party."

We must here check our gossip in mid volley and adjourn the rest of our critical chapter to a more convenient season.

VI.

PAST AND PRESENT.[1]

HERE is Carlyle's new poem, his Iliad of English woes, to follow his poem on France, entitled the History of the French Revolution. In its first aspect it is a political tract, and since Burke, since Milton, we have had nothing to compare with it. It grapples honestly with the facts lying before all men, groups and disposes them with a master's mind, and, with a heart full of manly tenderness, offers his best counsel to his brothers. Obviously it is the book of a powerful and accomplished thinker, who has looked with naked eyes at the dreadful political signs in England for the last few years, has conversed much on these topics with such

[1] *The Dial*, vol. iv. p. 96.

wise men of all ranks and parties as are drawn to a scholar's house, until such daily and nightly meditation has grown into a great connection, if not a system of thoughts; and the topic of English politics becomes the best vehicle for the expression of his recent thinking, recommended to him by the desire to give some timely counsels, and to strip the worst mischiefs of their plausibility. It is a brave and just book, and not a semblance. "No new truth," say the critics on all sides. Is it so? Truth is very old, but the merit of seers is not to invent but to dispose objects in their right places, and he is the commander who is always in the mount, whose eye not only sees details, but throws crowds of details into their right arrangement and a larger and juster totality than any other. The book makes great approaches to true contemporary history, a very rare success, and firmly holds up to daylight the absurdities still tolerated in the English and European system. It is such an appeal to the conscience and honor of England as cannot be forgotten, or be feigned to be forgotten. It has the merit which belongs to every honest book, that it was self-examining before it was eloquent, and so hits all other men, and, as the country people say of good preaching, "comes bounce down into every pew." Every reader shall carry away something. The scholar shall read and write, the farmer and mechanic shall toil, with new resolution, nor forget the book when they resume their labor.

Though no theocrat, and more than most philosophers a believer in political systems, Mr. Carlyle very fairly finds the calamity of the times, not in bad bills of Parliament, nor the remedy in good bills, but the vice in false and superficial aims of the people,

and the remedy in honesty and insight. Like every work of genius, its great value is in telling such simple truths. As we recall the topics, we are struck with the force given to the plain truths ; the picture of the English nation all sitting enchanted, the poor, enchanted so that they cannot work, the rich, enchanted so that they cannot enjoy, and are rich in vain ; the exposure of the progress of fraud into all arts and social activities ; the proposition that the laborer must have a greater share in his earnings ; that the principle of permanence shall be admitted into all contracts of mutual service ; that the state shall provide at least schoolmaster's education for all the citizens ; the exhortation to the workman that he shall respect the work and not the wages ; to the scholar that he shall be there for light ; to the idle, that no man shall sit idle ; the picture of Abbot Samson, the true governor, who "is not there to expect reason and nobleness of others, he is there to give them of his own reason and nobleness ;" and the assumption throughout the book, that a new chivalry and nobility, namely the dynasty of labor, is replacing the old nobilities. These things strike us with a force which reminds us of the morals of the Oriental or early Greek masters, and of no modern book. Truly in these things is great reward. It is not by sitting still at a grand distance and calling the human race *larvæ*, that men are to be helped, nor by helping the depraved after their own foolish fashion, but by doing unweariedly the particular work we were born to do. Let no man think himself absolved because he does a generous action and befriends the poor, but let him see whether he so holds his property that a benefit goes from it to all. A man's diet should be what is simplest and readi-

est to be had, because it is so private a good. His house should be better, because that is for the use of hundreds, perhaps of thousands, and is the property of the traveller. But his speech is a perpetual and public instrument ; let that always side with the race and yield neither a lie nor a sneer. His manners, — let them be hospitable and civilizing, so that no Phidias or Raphael shall have taught anything better in canvas or stone ; and his acts should be representative of the human race, as one who makes them rich in his having, and poor in his want.

It requires great courage in a man of letters to handle the contemporary practical questions ; not because he then has all men for his rivals, but because of the infinite entanglements of the problem, and the waste of strength in gathering unripe fruits. The task is superhuman ; and the poet knows well that a little time will do more than the most puissant genius. Time stills the loud noise of opinions, sinks the small, raises the great, so that the true emerges without effort and in perfect harmony to all eyes ; but the truth of the present hour, except in particulars and single relations, is unattainable. Each man can very well know his own part of duty, if he will ; but to bring out the truth for beauty, and as literature, surmounts the powers of art. The most elaborate history of to-day will have the oddest dislocated look in the next generation. The historian of to-day is yet three ages off. The poet cannot descend into the turbid present without injury to his rarest gifts. Hence that necessity of isolation which genius has always felt. He must stand on his glass tripod, if he would keep his electricity.

But when the political aspects are so calamitous that

the sympathies of the man overpower the habits of the poet, a higher than literary inspiration may succor him. It is a costly proof of character, that the most renowned scholar of England should take his reputation in his hand and should descend into the ring ; and he has added to his love whatever honor his opinions may forfeit. To atone for this departure from the vows of the scholar and his eternal duties to this secular charity, we have at least this gain, that here is a message which those to whom it was addressed cannot choose but hear. Though they die, they must listen. It is plain that whether by hope or by fear, or were it only by delight in this panorama of brilliant images, all the great classes of English society must read, even those whose existence it proscribes. Poor Queen Victoria, — poor Sir Robert Peel, poor Primate and Bishops, — poor Dukes and Lords ! There is no help in place or pride or in looking another way ; a grain of wit is more penetrating than the lightning of the night-storm, which no curtains or shutters will keep out. Here is a book which will be read, no thanks to anybody but itself. What pains, what hopes, what vows, shall come of the reading ! Here is a book as full of treason as an egg is full of meat, and every lordship and worship and high form and ceremony of English conservatism tossed like a foot-ball into the air, and kept in the air, with merciless kicks and rebounds, and yet not a word is punishable by statute. The wit has eluded all official zeal ; and yet these dire jokes, these cunning thrusts, this flaming sword of Cherubim waved high in air, illuminates the whole horizon, and shows to the eyes of the universe every wound it inflicts. Worst of all for the party attacked, it bereaves them before-

hand of all sympathy, by anticipating the plea of poetic and humane conservatism, and impressing the reader with the conviction that the satirist himself has the truest love for everything old and excellent in English land and institutions, and a genuine respect for the basis of truth in those whom he exposes.

We are at some loss how to state what strikes us as the fault of this remarkable book, for the variety and excellence of the talent displayed in it is pretty sure to leave all special criticism in the wrong. And we may easily fail in expressing the general objection which we feel. It appears to us as a certain disproportion in the picture, caused by the obtrusion of the whims of the painter. In this work, as in his former labors, Mr. Carlyle reminds us of a sick giant. His humors are expressed with so much force of constitution that his fancies are more attractive and more credible than the sanity of duller men. But the habitual exaggeration of the tone wearies whilst it stimulates. It is felt to be so much deduction from the universality of the picture. It is not serene sunshine, but everything is seen in lurid storm-lights. Every object attitudinizes, to the very mountains and stars almost, under the refraction of this wonderful humorist ; and instead of the common earth and sky, we have a Martin's Creation or Judgment Day. A crisis has always arrived which requires a *deus ex machinâ*. One can hardly credit, whilst under the spell of this magician, that the world always had the same bankrupt look, to foregoing ages as to us, — as of a failed world just re-collecting its old withered forces to begin again and try to do a little business. It was perhaps inseparable from the attempt to write a book of wit and imagination on English politics, that a

certain local emphasis and love of effect, such as is the vice of preaching, should appear, — producing on the reader a feeling of forlorness by the excess of value attributed to circumstances. But the splendor of wit cannot outdazzle the calm daylight, which always shows every individual man in balance with his age, and able to work out his own salvation from all the follies of that, and no such glaring contrasts or severalties in that or this. Each age has its own follies, as its majority is made up of foolish young people ; its superstitions appear no superstitions to itself ; and if you should ask the contemporary, he would tell you, with pride or with regret, (according as he was practical or poetic), that he had none. But after a short time, down go its follies and weakness and the memory of them ; its virtues alone remain, and its limitation assumes the poetic form of a beautiful superstition, as the dimness of our sight clothes the objects in the horizon with mist and color. The revelation of Reason is this of the unchangeableness of the fact of humanity under all its subjective aspects ; that to the cowering it always cowers, to the daring it opens great avenues. The ancients are only venerable to us because distance has destroyed what was trivial ; as the sun and stars affect us only grandly, because we cannot reach to their smoke and surfaces and say, Is that all ?

And yet the gravity of the times, the manifold and increasing dangers of the English State, may easily excuse some over-coloring of the picture ; and we at this distance are not so far removed from any of the specific evils, and are deeply participant in too many, not to share the gloom and thank the love and courage of the counsellor. This book is full of humanity, and

nothing is more excellent in this as in all Mr. Carlyle's works, than the attitude of the writer. He has the dignity of a man of letters, who knows what belongs to him, and never deviates from his sphere ; a continuer of the great line of scholars, he sustains their office in the highest credit and honor. If the good heaven have any good word to impart to this unworthy generation, here is one scribe qualified and clothed for its occasion. One excellence he has in an age of Mammon and of criticism, that he never suffers the eye of his wonder to close. Let who will be the dupe of trifles, he cannot keep his eye off from that gracious Infinite which embosoms us.

As a literary artist he has great merits, beginning with the main one that he never wrote one dull line. How well-read, how adroit, what thousand arts in his one art of writing ; with his expedient for expressing those unproven opinions which he entertains but will not endorse, by summoning one of his men of straw from the cell, — and the respectable Sauerteig, or Teufelsdröckh, or Dryasdust, or Picturesque Traveller, says what is put into his mouth, and disappears. That morbid temperament has given his rhetoric a somewhat bloated character ; a luxury to many imaginative and learned persons, like a showery south-wind with its sun-bursts and rapid chasing of lights and glooms over the landscape, and yet its offensiveness to multitudes of reluctant lovers makes us often wish some concession were possible on the part of the humorist. Yet it must not be forgotten that in all his fun of castanets, or playing of tunes with a whip-lash like some renowned charioteers, — in all this glad and needful venting of his redundant spirits, he does yet ever and

anon, as if catching the glance of one wise man in the crowd, quit his tempestuous key, and lance at him in clear level tone the very word, and then with new glee return to his game. He is like a lover or an outlaw who wraps up his message in a serenade, which is nonsense to the sentinel, but salvation to the ear for which it is meant. He does not dodge the question, but gives sincerity where it is due.

One word more respecting this remarkable style. We have in literature few specimens of magnificence. Plato is the purple ancient, and Bacon and Milton the moderns of the richest strains. Burke sometimes reaches to that exuberant fulness, though deficient in depth. Carlyle, in his strange, half-mad way, has entered the Field of the Cloth of Gold, and shown a vigor and wealth of resource which has no rival in the tourney-play of these times ; — the indubitable champion of England. Carlyle is the first domestication of the modern system, with its infinity of details, into style. We have been civilizing very fast, building London and Paris, and now planting New England and India, New Holland and Oregon, — and it has not appeared in literature ; there has been no analogous expansion and recomposition in books. Carlyle's style is the first emergence of all this wealth and labor with which the world has gone with child so long. London and Europe, tunnelled, graded, corn-lawed, with trade-nobility, and East and West Indies for dependencies ; and America, with the Rocky Hills in the horizon, have never before been conquered in literature. This is the first invasion and conquest. How like an air-balloon or bird of Jove does he seem to float over the continent, and stooping here and there pounce on a fact as

a symbol which was never a symbol before. This is the first experiment, and something of rudeness and haste must be pardoned to so great an achievement. It will be done again and again, sharper, simpler ; but fortunate is he who did it first, though never so giant-like and fabulous. This grandiose character pervades his wit and his imagination. We have never had anything in literature so like earthquakes as the laughter of Carlyle. He "shakes with his mountain mirth." It is like the laughter of the Genii in the horizon. These jokes shake down Parliament-house and Windsor Castle, Temple and Tower, and the future shall echo the dangerous peals. The other particular of magnificence is in his rhymes. Carlyle is a poet who is altogether too burly in his frame and habit to submit to the limits of metre. Yet he is full of rhythm, not only in the perpetual melody of his periods, but in the burdens, refrains, and grand returns of his sense and music. Whatever thought or motto has once appeared to him fraught with meaning, becomes an omen to him henceforward, and is sure to return with deeper tones and weightier import, now as threat, now as confirmation, in gigantic reverberation, as if the hills, the horizon, and the next ages returned the sound.

VII.

A LETTER.[1]

As we are very liable, in common with the letter-writing world, to fall behindhand in our correspondence ; and a little more liable because in consequence

[1] *The Dial*, vol. iv. p. 262.

of our editorial function we receive more epistles than our individual share, we have thought that we might clear our account by writing a quarterly catholic letter to all and several who have honored us, in verse or prose, with their confidence, and expressed a curiosity to know our opinion. We shall be compelled to dispose very rapidly of quite miscellaneous topics.

And first, in regard to the writer who has given us his speculations on Rail-roads and Air-roads, our correspondent shall have his own way. To the railway, we must say, — like the courageous lord mayor at his first hunting, when told the hare was coming, — "Let it come, in Heaven's name, I am not afraid on 't." Very unlooked-for political and social effects of the iron road are fast appearing. It will require an expansion of the police of the old world. When a railroad train shoots through Europe every day from Brussels to Vienna, from Vienna to Constantinople, it cannot stop every twenty or thirty miles at a German custom-house, for examination of property and passports. But when our correspondent proceeds to flying-machines, we have no longer the smallest taper-light of credible information and experience left, and must speak on *a priori* grounds.

Shortly then, we think the population is not yet quite fit for them, and therefore there will be none. Our friend suggests so many inconveniences from piracy out of the high air to orchards and lone houses, and also to other high fliers ; and the total inadequacy of the present system of defence, that we have not the heart to break the sleep of the good public by the repetition of these details. When children come into the library, we put the inkstand and the watch on the

high shelf until they be a little older ; and Nature has set the sun and moon in plain sight and use, but laid them on the high shelf where her roystering boys may not in some mad Saturday afternoon pull them down or burn their fingers. The sea and the iron road are safer toys for such ungrown people ; we are not yet ripe to be birds.

In the next place, to fifteen letters on Communities, and the Prospects of Culture, and the destinies of the cultivated class, — what answer ? Excellent reasons have been shown us why the writers, obviously persons of sincerity and elegance, should be dissatisfied with the life they lead, and with their company. They have exhausted all its benefit, and will not bear it much longer. Excellent reasons they have shown why something better should be tried. They want a friend to whom they can speak and from whom they may hear now and then a reasonable word. They are willing to work, so it be with friends. They do not entertain anything absurd or even difficult. They do not wish to force society into hated reforms, nor to break with society. They do not wish a township, or any large expenditure, or incorporated association, but simply a concentration of chosen people. By the slightest possible concert, persevered in through four or five years, they think that a neighborhood might be formed of friends who would provoke each other to the best activity. They believe that this society would fill up the terrific chasm of ennui, and would give their genius that inspiration which it seems to wait in vain.

But, "the selfishness !" One of the writers relentingly says, "What shall my uncles and aunts do without me ?" and desires distinctly to be understood not

to propose the Indian mode of giving decrepit relatives as much of the mud of holy Ganges as they can swallow, and more, but to begin the enterprise of concentration by concentrating all uncles and aunts in one delightful village by themselves ! — so heedless is our correspondent of putting all the dough into one pan, and all the leaven into another. Another objection seems to have occurred to a subtle but ardent advocate. Is it, he writes, a too great wilfulness and intermeddling with life, — with life, which is better accepted than calculated ? Perhaps so; but let us not be too curiously good. The Buddhist is a practical Necessitarian; the Yankee is not. We do a great many selfish things every day; among them all let us do one thing of enlightened selfishness. It were fit to forbid concert and calculation in this particular, if that were our system, if we were up to the mark of self-denial and faith in our general activity. But to be prudent in all the particulars of life, and in this one thing alone religiously forbearing; prudent to secure to ourselves an injurious society, temptations to folly and despair, degrading examples, and enemies; and only abstinent when it is proposed to provide ourselves with guides, examples, lovers !

We shall hardly trust ourselves to reply to arguments by which we would too gladly be persuaded. The more discontent, the better we like it. It is not for nothing, we assure ourselves, that our people are busied with these projects of a better social state, and that sincere persons of all parties are demanding somewhat vital and poetic of our stagnant society. How fantastic and unpresentable soever the theory has hitherto seemed, how swiftly shrinking from the exami-

nation of practical men, let us not lose the warning of that most significant dream. How joyfully we have felt the admonition of larger natures which despised our aims and pursuits, conscious that a voice out of heaven spoke to us in that scorn. But it would be unjust not to remind our younger friends that whilst this aspiration has always made its mark in the lives of men of thought, in vigorous individuals it does not remain a detached object, but is satisfied along with the satisfaction of other aims. To live solitary and unexpressed, is painful, — painful in proportion to one's consciousness of ripeness and equality to the offices of friendship. But herein we are never quite forsaken by the Divine Providence. The loneliest man, after twenty years, discovers that he stood in a circle of friends, who will then show like a close fraternity held by some masonic tie. But we are impatient of the tedious introductions of Destiny, and a little faithless, and would venture something to accelerate them. One thing is plain, that discontent and the luxury of tears will bring nothing to pass. Regrets and Bohemian castles and æsthetic villages are not a very self-helping class of productions, but are the voices of debility. Especially to one importunate correspondent we must say that there is no chance for the æsthetic village. Every one of the villagers has committed his several blunder; his genius was good, his stars consenting, but he was a marplot. And though the recuperative force in every man may be relied on infinitely, it must be relied on before it will exert itself. As long as he sleeps in the shade of the present error, the after-nature does not betray its resources. Whilst he dwells in the old sin, he will pay the old fine.

More letters we have on the subject of the position of young men, which accord well enough with what we see and hear. There is an American disease, a paralysis of the active faculties, which falls on young men of this country as soon as they have finished their college education, which strips them of all manly aims and bereaves them of animal spirits; so that the noblest youths are in a few years converted into pale Caryatides to uphold the temple of conventions. They are in the state of the young Persians, when "that mighty Yezdam prophet" addressed them and said, "Behold the signs of evil days are come; there is now no longer any right course of action, nor any self-devotion left among the Iranis." As soon as they have arrived at this term, there are no employments to satisfy them, they are educated above the work of their times and country, and disdain it. Many of the more acute minds pass into a lofty criticism of these things, which only embitters their sensibility to the evil and widens the feeling of hostility between them and the citizens at large. From this cause, companies of the best-educated young men in the Atlantic states every week take their departure for Europe; for no business that they have in that country, but simply because they shall so be hid from the reproachful eyes of their countrymen and ageeably entertained for one or two years, with some lurking hope, no doubt, that something may turn up to give them a decided direction. It is easy to see that this is only a postponement of their proper work, with the additional disadvantage of a two years' vacation. Add that this class is rapidly increasing by the infatuation of the active class, who, whilst they regard these young Athenians with suspicion and dislike, educate

their own children in the same courses, and use all possible endeavors to secure to them the same result.

Certainly we are not insensible to this calamity, as described by the observers or witnessed by ourselves. It is not quite new and peculiar; though we should not know where to find in literature any record of so much unbalanced intellectuality, such undeniable apprehension without talent, so much power without equal applicability, as our young men pretend to. Yet in Theodore Mundt's account of Frederic Hölderlin's "Hyperion," we were not a little struck with the following Jeremiad of the despair of Germany, whose tone is still so familiar that we were somewhat mortified to find that it was written in 1799. "Then came I to the Germans. I cannot conceive of a people more disjoined than the Germans. Mechanics you shall see, but no man. Is it not like some battle-field, where hands and arms and all members lie scattered about, whilst the life-blood runs away into the sand? Let every man mind his own, you say, and I say the same. Only let him mind it with all his heart, and not with this cold study, literally, hypocritically, to appear that which he passes for, — but in good earnest, and in all love, let him be that which he is; then there is a soul in his deed. And is he driven into a circumstance where the spirit must not live? Let him thrust it from him with scorn, and learn to dig and plough. There is nothing holy which is not desecrated, which is not degraded to a mean end among this people. It is heart-rending to see your poet, your artist, and all who still revere genius, who love and foster the Beautiful. The Good! They live in the world as strangers in their own house; they are like the patient Ulysses whilst he sat in the guise of a beggar

at his own door, whilst shameless rioters shouted in the hall and asked, Who brought the ragamuffin here? Full of love, talent and hope, spring up the darlings of the muse among the Germans; some seven years later, and they flit about like ghosts, cold and silent; they are like a soil which an enemy has sown with poison, that it will not bear a blade of grass. On earth all is imperfect! is the old proverb of the German. Aye, but if one should say to these God-forsaken, that with them all is imperfect only because they leave nothing pure which they do not pollute, nothing holy which they do not defile with their fumbling hands; that with them nothing prospers because the godlike nature which is the root of all prosperity they do not revere; that with them, truly, life is shallow and anxious and full of discord, because they despise genius, which brings power and nobleness into manly action, cheerfulness into endurance, and love and brotherhood into towns and houses. Where a people honors genius in its artists, there breathes like an atmosphere a universal soul, to which the shy sensibility opens, which melts self-conceit, — all hearts become pious and great, and it adds fire to heroes. The home of all men is with such a people, and there will the stranger gladly abide. But where the divine nature and the artist is crushed, the sweetness of life is gone, and every other planet is better than the earth. Men deteriorate, folly increases, and a gross mind with it; drunkenness comes with a disaster; with the wantonness of the tongue and with the anxiety for a livelihood the blessing of every year becomes a curse, and all the gods depart."

The steep antagonism between the money-getting and the academic class must be freely admitted, and

perhaps is the more violent, that whilst our work is imposed by the soil and the sea, our culture is the tradition of Europe. But we cannot share the desperation of our contemporaries; least of all should we think a preternatural enlargement of the intellect a calamity. A new perception, the smallest new activity given to the perceptive power, is a victory won to the living universe from Chaos and old Night, and cheaply bought by any amounts of hard fare and false social position. The balance of mind and body will redress itself fast enough. Superficialness is the real distemper. In all the cases we have ever seen where people were supposed to suffer from too much wit, or, as men said, from a blade too sharp for the scabbard, it turned out that they had not wit enough. It may easily happen that we are grown very idle, and must go to work, and that the times must be worse before they are better. It is very certain that speculation is no succedaneum for life. What we would know, we must do. As if any taste or imagination could take the place of fidelity! The old Duty is the old God. And we may come to this by the rudest teaching. A friend of ours went five years ago to Illinois to buy a farm for his son. Though there were crowds of emigrants in the roads, the country was open on both sides, and long intervals between hamlets and houses. Now after five years he had just been to visit the young farmer and see how he prospered, and reports that a miracle had been wrought. From Massachusetts to Illinois the land is fenced in and builded over, almost like New England itself, and the proofs of thrifty cultivation abound; — a result not so much owing to the natural increase of population, as to the hard times, which, driving men out of cities and trade,

forced them to take off their coats and go to work on the land; which has rewarded them not only with wheat but with habits of labor. Perhaps the adversities of our commerce have not yet been pushed to the wholesomest degree of severity. Apathies and total want of work, and reflection on the imaginative character of American life, etc., etc., are like seasickness, and never will obtain any sympathy if there is a wood-pile in the yard, or an unweeded patch in the garden; not to mention the graver absurdity of a youth of noble aims who can find no field for his energies, whilst the colossal wrongs of the Indian, of the Negro, of the emigrant, remain unmitigated, and the religious, civil and judicial forms of the country are confessedly effete and offensive. We must refer our clients back to themselves, believing that every man knows in his heart the cure for the disease he so ostentatiously bewails.

As far as our correspondents have entangled their private griefs with the cause of American Literature, we counsel them to disengage themselves as fast as possible. In Cambridge orations and elsewhere there is much inquiry for that great absentee American Literature. What can have become of it? The least said is best. A literature is no man's private concern, but a secular and generic result, and is the affair of a power which works by a prodigality of life and force very dismaying to behold, — every trait of beauty purchased by hecatombs of private tragedy. The pruning in the wild gardens of nature is never forborne. Many of the best must die of consumption, many of despair, and many be stupid and insane, before the one great and fortunate life which they each predicted can shoot up into a thrifty and beneficent existence.

VIII.

THE TRAGIC.[1]

He has seen but half the universe who never has been shown the house of Pain. As the salt sea covers more than two thirds of the surface of the globe, so sorrow encroaches in man on felicity. The conversation of men is a mixture of regrets and apprehensions. I do not know but the prevalent hue of things to the eye of leisure is melancholy. In the dark hours, our existence seems to be a defensive war, a struggle against the encroaching All, which threatens surely to engulf us soon, and is impatient of our short reprieve. How slender the possession that yet remains to us; how faint the animation! how the spirit seems already to contract its domain, retiring within narrower walls by the loss of memory, leaving its planted fields to erasure and annihilation. Already our own thoughts and words have an alien sound. There is a simultaneous diminution of memory and hope. Projects that once we laughed and leapt to execute, find us now sleepy and preparing to lie down in the snow. And in the serene hours we have no courage to spare. We cannot afford to let go any advantages. The riches of body or of mind which we do not need to-day, are the reserved fund against the calamity that may arrive to-morrow. It is usually agreed that some nations have a more sombre temperament, and one would say that history gave no record of any society in which despondency came so readily to

[1] From the course on "Human Life," read in Boston, 1839–40. Published in *The Dial*, vol. iv. p. 515.

heart as we see it and feel it in ours. Melancholy cleaves to the English mind in both hemispheres as closely as to the strings of an Æolian harp. Men and women at thirty years, and even earlier, have lost all spring and vivacity, and if they fail in their first enterprises they throw up the game. But whether we and those who are next to us are more or less vulnerable, no theory of life can have any right which leaves out of account the values of vice, pain, disease, poverty, insecurity, disunion, fear and death.

What are the conspicuous tragic elements in human nature? The bitterest tragic element in life to be derived from an intellectual source is the belief in a brute Fate or Destiny; the belief that the order of nature and events is controlled by a law not adapted to man, nor man to that, but which holds on its way to the end, serving him if his wishes chance to lie in the same course, crushing him if his wishes lie contrary to it, and heedless whether it serves or crushes him. This is the terrible meaning that lies at the foundation of the old Greek tragedy, and makes the Œdipus and Antigone and Orestes objects of such hopeless commiseration. They must perish, and there is no over-god to stop or to mollify this hideous enginery that grinds or thunders, and snatches them up into its terrific system. The same idea makes the paralyzing terror with which the East Indian mythology haunts the imagination. The same thought is the predestination of the Turk. And universally, in uneducated and unreflecting persons on whom too the religious sentiment exerts little force, we discover traits of the same superstition: "If you balk water you will be drowned the next time;" "if you count ten stars you will fall down dead;" "if you spill

the salt;" "if your fork sticks upright in the floor;" "if you say the Lord's prayer backwards," — and so on, a several penalty, nowise grounded in the nature of the thing, but on an arbitrary will. But this terror of contravening an unascertained and unascertainable will, cannot co-exist with reflection: it disappears with civilization, and can no more be reproduced than the fear of ghosts after childhood. It is discriminated from the doctrine of Philosophical Necessity herein: that the last is an Optimism, and therefore the suffering individual finds his good consulted in the good of all, of which he is a part. But in destiny, it is not the good of the whole or the *best will* that is enacted, but only *one particular will.* Destiny properly is not a will at all, but an immense whim; and this the only ground of terror and despair in the rational mind, and of tragedy in literature. Hence the antique tragedy, which was founded on this faith, can never be reproduced.

After reason and faith have introduced a better public and private tradition, the tragic element is somewhat circumscribed. There must always remain, however, the hindrance of our private satisfaction by the laws of the world. The law which establishes nature and the human race, continually thwarts the will of ignorant individuals, and this in the particulars of disease, want, insecurity and disunion.

But the essence of tragedy does not seem to me to lie in any list of particular evils. After we have enumerated famine, fever, inaptitude, mutilation, rack, madness and loss of friends, we have not yet included the proper tragic element, which is Terror, and which does not respect definite evils but indefinite ; an ominous spirit which haunts the afternoon and the night, idleness and solitude.

A low, haggard sprite sits by our side, "casting the fashion of uncertain evils" — a sinister presentiment, a power of the imagination to dislocate things orderly and cheerful and show them in startling array. Hark! what sounds on the night wind, the cry of Murder in that friendly house; see these marks of stamping feet, of hidden riot. The whisper overheard, the detected glance, the glare of malignity, ungrounded fears, suspicions, half-knowledge and mistakes, darken the brow and chill the heart of men. And accordingly it is natures not clear, not of quick and steady perceptions, but imperfect characters from which somewhat is hidden that all others see, who suffer most from these causes. In those persons who move the profoundest pity, tragedy seems to consist in temperament, not in events. There are people who have an appetite for grief, pleasure is not strong enough and they crave pain, mithridatic stomachs which must be fed on poisoned bread, natures so doomed that no prosperity can soothe their ragged and dishevelled desolation. They mis-hear and mis-behold, they suspect and dread. They handle every nettle and ivy in the hedge, and tread on every snake in the meadow.

> "Come bad chance,
> And we add to it our strength,
> And we teach it art and length,
> Itself o'er us to advance."

Frankly, then, it is necessary to say that all sorrow dwells in a low region. It is superficial; for the most part fantastic, or in the appearance and not in things. Tragedy is in the eye of the observer, and not in the heart of the sufferer. It looks like an insupportable load under which earth moans aloud. But analyze it;

it is not I, it is not you, it is always another person who is tormented. If a man says, Lo ! I suffer — it is apparent that he suffers not, for grief is dumb. It is so distributed as not to destroy. That which would rend you falls on tougher textures. That which seems intolerable reproach or bereavement, does not take from the accused or bereaved man or woman appetite or sleep. Some men are above grief, and some below it. Few are capable of love. In phlegmatic natures calamity is unaffecting, in shallow natures it is rhetorical. Tragedy must be somewhat which I can respect. A querulous habit is not tragedy. A panic such as frequently in ancient or savage nations put a troop or an army to flight without an enemy ; a fear of ghosts ; a terror of freezing to death that seizes a man in a winter midnight on the moors; a fright at uncertain sounds heard by a family at night in the cellar or on the stairs, — are terrors that make the knees knock and the teeth clatter, but are no tragedy, any more than seasickness, which may also destroy life. It is full of illusion. As it comes, it has its support. The most exposed classes, soldiers, sailors, paupers, are nowise destitute of animal spirits. The spirit is true to itself, and finds its own support in any condition, learns to live in what is called calamity as easily as in what is called felicity; as the frailest glass-bell will support a weight of a thousand pounds of water at the bottom of a river or sea, if filled with the same.

A man should not commit his tranquillity to things, but should keep as much as possible the reins in his own hands, rarely giving way to extreme emotion of joy or grief. It is observed that the earliest works of the art of sculpture are countenances of sublime tranquillity.

The Egyptian sphinxes, which sit to-day as they sat when the Greek came and saw them and departed, and when the Roman came and saw them and departed, and as they will still sit when the Turk, the Frenchman and the Englishman, who visit them now, shall have passed by, — "with their stony eyes fixed on the East and on the Nile," have countenances expressive of complacency and repose, an expression of health, deserving their longevity, and verifying the primeval sentence of history on the permanency of that people, "Their strength is to sit still." To this architectural stability of the human form, the Greek genius added an ideal beauty, without disturbing the seals of serenity; permitting no violence of mirth, or wrath, or suffering. This was true to human nature. For, in life, actions are few, opinions even few, prayers few; loves, hatreds, or any emissions of the soul. All that life demands of us through the greater part of the day, is an equilibrium, a readiness, open eyes and ears, and free hands. Society asks this, and truth, and love, and the genius of our life. There is a fire in some men which demands an outlet in some rude action; they betray their impatience of quiet by an irregular Catalinarian gait; by irregular, faltering, disturbed speech, too emphatic for the occasion. They treat trifles with a tragic air. This is not beautiful. Could they not lay a rod or two of stone wall, and work off this superabundant irritability? When two strangers meet in the highway, what each demands of the other is that the aspect should show a firm mind, ready for any event of good or ill, prepared alike to give death or to give life, as the emergency of the next moment may require. We must walk as guests in nature; not impassioned, but

cool and disengaged. A man should try Time, and his face should wear the expression of a just judge, who has nowise made up his opinion, who fears nothing, and even hopes nothing, but who puts nature and fortune on their merits: he will hear the case out, and then decide. For all melancholy, as all passion, belongs to the exterior life. Whilst a man is not grounded in the divine life by his proper roots, he clings by some tendrils of affection to society — mayhap to what is best and greatest in it, and in calm times it will not appear that he is adrift and not moored ; but let any shock take place in society, any revolution of custom, of law, of opinion, and at once his type of permanence is shaken. The disorder of his neighbors appears to him universal disorder ; chaos is come again. But in truth he was already a driving wreck, before the wind arose which only revealed to him his vagabond state. If a man is centred, men and events appear to him a fair image or reflection of that which he knoweth beforehand in himself. If any perversity or profligacy break out in society, he will join with others to avert the mischief, but it will not arouse resentment or fear, because he discerns its impassable limits. He sees already in the ebullition of sin the simultaneous redress.

Particular reliefs also, fit themselves to human calamities ; for the world will be in equilibrium, and hates all manner of exaggeration.

Time, the consoler, Time, the rich carrier of all changes, dries the freshest tears by obtruding new figures, new costumes, new roads, on our eye, new voices on our ear. As the west wind lifts up again the heads of the wheat which were bent down and lodged in the storm, and combs out the matted and dishevelled

grass as it lay in night-locks on the ground, so we let in time as a drying wind into the seed-field of thoughts which are dark and wet and low bent. Time restores to them temper and elasticity. How fast we forget the blow that threatened to cripple us. Nature will not sit still; the faculties will do somewhat; new hopes spring, new affections twine and the broken is whole again.

Time consoles, but Temperament resists the impression of pain. Nature proportions her defence to the assault. Our human being is wonderfully plastic; if it cannot win this satisfaction here, it makes itself amends by running out there and winning that. It is like a stream of water, which is dammed up on one bank, overruns the other, and flows equally at its own convenience over sand, or mud, or marble. Most suffering is only apparent. We fancy it is torture; the patient has his own compensations. A tender American girl doubts of Divine Providence whilst she reads the horrors of "the middle passage;" and they are bad enough at the mildest; but to such as she these crucifixions do not come: they come to the obtuse and barbarous, to whom they are not horrid, but only a little worse than the old sufferings. They exchange a cannibal war for the stench of the hold. They have gratifications which would be none to the civilized girl. The market-man never damned the lady because she had not paid her bill, but the stout Irishwoman has to take that once a month. She however never feels weakness in her back because of the slave-trade. This self-adapting strength is especially seen in disease. "It is my duty," said Sir Charles Bell, "to visit certain wards of the hospital where there is no patient

admitted but with that complaint which most fills the imagination with the idea of insupportable pain and certain death. Yet these wards are not the least remarkable for the composure and cheerfulness of their inmates. The individual who suffers has a mysterious counterbalance to that condition, which, to us who look upon her, appears to be attended with no alleviating circumstance." Analogous supplies are made to those individuals whose character leads them to vast exertions of body and mind. Napoleon said to one of his friends at St. Helena, "Nature seems to have calculated that I should have great reverses to endure, for she has given me a temperament like a block of marble. Thunder cannot move it ; the shaft merely glides along. The great events of my life have slipped over me without making any demand on my moral or physical nature."

The intellect is a consoler, which delights in detaching or putting an interval between a man and his fortune, and so converts the sufferer into a spectator and his pain into poetry. It yields the joys of conversation, of letters and of science. Hence also the torments of life become tuneful tragedy, solemn and soft with music, and garnished with rich dark pictures. But higher still than the activities of art, the intellect in its purity and the moral sense in its purity are not distinguished from each other, and both ravish us into a region whereinto these passionate clouds of sorrow cannot rise.

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